# THE TRAINING OF THE CHOSEN PEOPLE

GEORGE E. HORR

Class BS1197
Book .H6
Copyright No.

COPYRIGHT DEPOSIT.

# The Training of the Chosen People

BY

PROF. GEORGE E. HORR, D. D.

*Professor of Church History in the Newton Theological Institution*

BIBLE STUDY PUBLISHING COMPANY
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

BS1194
H65

LIBRARY of CONGRESS
Two Copies received
SEP 21 1908
Copyright Entry
Sep. 21, 1908
CLASS a XXc No.
21809
COPY B

Copyright, 1906, 1907, and 1908
by the
BIBLE STUDY PUBLISHING CO., Boston

LC Control Number
tmp96 031663

## PREFACE.

The chapters that make up this volume were published on successive weeks, during 1907, in a number of weekly and daily papers. They were designed to interpret the BIBLE STUDY UNION Course of Sunday School lessons on OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY.

The purpose of this volume is to interpret the moral and spiritual significance of the history in the light of the providential training of the Chosen People for their mission to the race.

The point of view is that of a student of history, who, on the one hand, does not believe that the conception of Jehovah and of His righteous law, against which Israel was always fighting as a spirited horse fights against a curb bit, was simply the product of the life and experience of Israel; nor, on the other hand, that the history of Israel was uninfluenced by the processes which explain the evolution of other nations.

In prosecuting these studies the impression has deepened, in the mind of the author, that the well-established results of modern critical investigations of the Scriptures do little to weaken the spiritual significance or authority of the narratives. Indeed, in many instances their effect is the reverse.

Another conviction has taken solidity in writing this book, namely, that not only was there a divine

element in the events which make up the history itself, but that the men who wrote the history were, in a large sense, divinely guided in their choice and setting of material. It would require omniscience to describe every factor and feature of the most insignificant event. It requires a high type of genius, such as we see in a Goethe or a Carlyle, to present the typical aspect of an ordinary happening. The authors or editors of the Old Testament historical narratives write throughout from the point of view of Jehovah. They do not by any means tell us all that we would like to know, but whatever they tell us is typical of the significance of the epoch or character in the eye of Jehovah. They give us the perspective of God. That a vast literature, embracing the events of fifteen hundred years, should have been composed by many writers with faithfulness to this difficult plan is a unique fact, which suggests important inferences.

GEORGE E. HORR.

Newton Centre, Mass.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS


| Chapter | | Page |
|---|---|---|
| I. | The Vision of Creation | 1 |
| II. | The Vision of Sin | 4 |
| III. | The Vision of Judgment | 7 |
| IV. | The Way of Faith | 10 |
| V. | The Life of Faith | 13 |
| VI. | The Forces that Transform Character | 16 |
| VII. | Man's Plans and God's Purpose | 20 |
| VIII. | The Resources of God | 24 |
| IX. | The Mighty Deliverance | 28 |
| X. | Making a Nation | 32 |
| XI. | The Secret of Failure | 36 |
| XII. | The Discipline of Israel | 40 |
| XIII. | Review of Chapters I-XII | 43 |
| XIV. | The Discipline in Righteousness | 47 |
| XV. | The Triumphs of Faith | 50 |
| XVI. | The Winning of Canaan | 54 |
| XVII. | The Hand of God in History | 57 |
| XVIII. | Overthrow and Redemption | 61 |
| XIX. | The New Epoch for Israel | 65 |
| XX. | A Success that Fails | 69 |
| XXI. | Saul and David | 73 |
| XXII. | The Career of David | 77 |
| XXIII. | The House of David | 80 |
| XXIV. | The Inheritance of Solomon | 84 |
| XXV. | The Folly of Solomon | 87 |
| XXVI. | Review of Chapters XIV-XXV | 91 |
| XXVII. | The Wrath of Man and God's Purpose | 94 |
| XXVIII. | The Folly of Moral Compromise | 98 |
| XXIX. | The Development of Tendencies | 103 |
| XXX. | The Clash of Forces | 107 |
| XXXI. | The Peril of Prosperity | 111 |
| XXXII. | The Rod of Jehovah | 115 |
| XXXIII. | Trusting in Princes | 119 |
| XXXIV. | Sin Bringeth Forth Death | 123 |
| XXXV. | The Hand of Jehovah | 127 |
| XXXVI. | The Word of the Lord | 132 |
| XXXVII. | The Capture of Jerusalem | 136 |
| XXXVIII. | The Fulfilment of Doom | 141 |
| XXXIX. | Review of Chapters XXVII-XXXVIII | 146 |

| Chapter | | Page |
|---|---|---|
| XL. | Progressive Deterioration | 149 |
| XLI. | The Evolution of Good | 153 |
| XLII. | The Transcendent Optimism | 157 |
| XLIII. | The Blessing to Mankind | 161 |
| XLIV. | The Ideal of Service | 165 |
| XLV. | God's Temporal Providence | 168 |
| XLVI. | Conscientious Devotion Rewarded | 172 |
| XLVII. | Human Ability Consecrated to God | 176 |
| XLVIII. | The Law of the Lord | 179 |
| XLIX. | The Insoluble Problem | 183 |
| L. | Judah's Loyalty to Jehovah | 187 |
| LI. | Weakness and Strength of Judaism | 191 |
| LII. | Review of Chapters XL-LI | 194 |

# The Training of the Chosen People

**Old Testament History**

## CHAPTER I.

### THE VISION OF CREATION.

Gen. chs. 1, 2.

A careful reader can hardly miss the spiritual significance of the Biblical narrative of the creation.

The origin of the universe is traced back to God. It is the product of His volition. When our souls respond to the loveliness of the springtime, or are moved by the sublimity of the mountains or the ocean, or are hushed in awe by the majesty and splendor of the starry heavens, we are answering to the manifestations of the thought of God. The universe brings us into contact with God in the same way that a mechanism, a picture, or a poem brings us into relation with the inventor, the artist or the poet, and interprets something of his personality. Or, to suggest a closer analogy, just as the child, whose life sprang from his father, and in whose veins and spirit his father's blood and temper pulsate, manifests and interprets his father, so creation reveals and interprets God. Wordsworth's immortal lines express the Christian feeling as to the created world:

> I have learned
> To look on nature, not as in the hour
> Of thoughtless youth, but hearing oftentimes
> The still, sad music of humanity.
> * * * * *
> And I have felt
> A presence that disturbs me with the joy
> Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
> Of something far more deeply interfused,
> Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
> And the round ocean and the living air,
> And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;
> A motion and a spirit that impels
> All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
> And rolls through all things.

Our theories of the process of creation do not, in the least, affect the rich implications of this truth.

We may conceive that the universe, including the higher forms of life, came into being by direct creative acts, or that it is the result of a process of evolution continued through ages. The method and process of creation are unimportant. The significant thing is that God did the act or is behind and within the process, as the hand is within the glove. The universe, culminating in the life of man, manifests, just so far as the nature of the material permits, the thought and will and character of God.

The narrative also clearly involves an affirmation of the inherent dignity and worth of men. Neither Sophocles, nor Shakespeare, nor Pascal in their noble and famous encomiums of man approach the majestic appreciation of the dignity of man uttered by the author of this narrative when he declares that man was made "in the image of God." It is not possible to put a higher estimate on man than that. If some one says that we cannot define the great phrase with precision, we reply that it is enough to know that man is so like God as to justify the description. Theologians have differed greatly as to the extent in which man lost the divine image by his transgression. But is it not certain that, however defaced it may be by an evil heredity or by vicious choices, it is not wholly obliterated? There is that in man to which God can appeal; there is that in man which God supremely values; there is that in man which Christ came to redeem.

And we are warranted in seeing in the creation of the world by God a pledge of the triumph of moral forces. The world as it came from His hands was "good." It reflected the divine character. It is still easy to discern goodness in creation. The evidences of it are all about us. But the world as we know it, especially the world of human life, is not wholly good. Evil exists. It is an insoluble problem, but it is not the controlling factor in the universe.

St. Peter speaks of God as "a faithful Creator"

(1 Pet. 4: 19). He sees that the creation of the world involves an obligation on the part of the Creator to make sure that good shall finally triumph in it. Origen, the early Christian father, asserted that there was "a gospel of creation." He meant that if the Creator possesses the character of goodness that we attribute to Him, He could not create a world that would be permanently hostile to His own nature and destructive of His own purposes because of the dominance of evil in it. Such an idea is contrary to the deepest instincts of the human soul.

Therefore, no matter how much we may be tempted to pessimism and despondency, we may always be confident that good will finally vanquish evil, because the world was made by a good God. The creation of the world is a pledge of God's redemptive purpose for the world that He has made. The promise and triumph of righteousness are woven into the very structure of the universe.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE VISION OF SIN.

Gen. 3 : 1—6 : 8.

Our lesson this week brings before us a narrative that, more than any other passage in literature, furnishes the background of Christian thought. In symbolical language it portrays the entrance of moral evil into human life. Throughout, it is marked by singular clearness of spiritual insight. Two or three out-standing truths demand special attention.

One is that evil is not involved in the original endowment of human nature. God did not exclude man from the things that at the creation He pronounced "good." Sin enters the human soul from without, it is not there as an essential part of human nature. When man admits evil into the citadel of his heart, it is there as a foreign element hostile to his true and natural experience. He cannot perfectly fraternize with it, or be wholly at peace with it.

And this statement is not vitiated by the fact that the soul's assimilation of evil has gone so far as to justify the stern language about the wickedness of the human heart used by the Biblical writers and the nobler pagan moralists. Still, man has not ceased to be man. If there is "a call of the wild" and "a call of the blood" there is a call of the image of God which we cannot escape. In the deepest sense the natural man is not the sinful man. When the prodigal son "came to himself," he returned to his father. Augustine uttered a universal conviction when he said, "Our heart is at unrest, until it find rest in Thee, O God." When Horace Bushnell described sin as "man's acting as he was not made to act," he gave a definition of sin that has hardly been surpassed.

No one ever acted more consistently upon this view of human nature than Jesus Christ. He confidently appealed to the man within the man. He absolutely trusted the intuitions and promptings of man's better

self. The life to which He called men was the normal life for which they were made. He looked at sin as an enemy from which He would deliver men.

The narrative also gives us a suggestion as to the nature of the law of God. It is restrictive that it may be protective. "Ye shall not eat . . . lest ye die." We are apt to look upon divine laws as so many hindrances to the enjoyment of the fullest and largest life; we put the law of God and the love of God into sharp contrast. There is no such opposition. The goodness of God is superlatively manifest in His law. The present writer will not soon forget an evening drive down a mountain side in the West Indies. We had been overtaken by the sudden coming of the tropical night, and the journey in the dark, along the edge of steep abysses, seemed full of peril, but we were assured when we thought of the strong iron rails that ran along the edge of the road that skirted the precipice. We regarded that parapet with gratitude. That was the feeling that moved the writer of the magnificent "Praise of the Law," known to us as the Hundred and Nineteenth Psalm.

> **Great peace have they that love thy law;**
> **And they have no occasion of stumbling.**
> * * * * *
> **Oh how love I thy law!**
> **It is my meditation all the day.**

The law of God, instead of being an arbitrary and harsh requirement to lessen human enjoyment or to dwarf human development, is a safeguard and guide to the richest and largest experience. It shows us, what the Sixteenth Psalm so beautifuly calls, "the path of life." The law of God is an evidence of God's love and care for man.

The entrance for sin was prepared by a skilfully suggested misconception of the purpose of God's law. The tempter fastened attention upon the prohibition, and ignored the loving, protective aim. He construed the law as an arbitrary diminution of human power

and blessedness, and it was simply man's lack of faith in the wisdom and goodness of God that opened the way for the first sin. In the light of this is it strange that the Gospel should make faith the condition of salvation?

Still further, this ancient record touches, as with the point of a needle, the gravest results of sin. One was personal, the other social. The most serious personal result was not being shut out of the garden, or the necessity of labor, but the breaking of fellowship between God and man. After the sin there sweeps into the souls of the man and the woman the sense of alienation from God, of fear and shame. We make the secondary primary when we make salvation consist in anything less than fellowship with God. No reliefs from external penalties, no blessedness of outward condition can constitute salvation, if the grave result of sin is not done away with, and the sinner restored to loving sympathy with God.

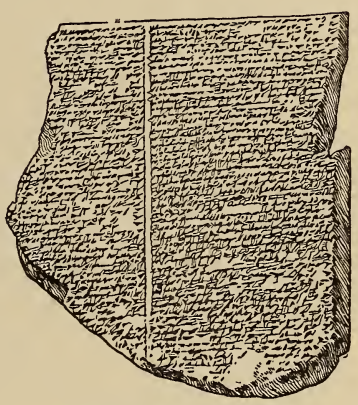
But the effects of sin are propagated in widening circles in the lives of others. The sin of the first parents registers itself in the crime of Cain. You cannot restrict and fence in evil. It perpetuates itself along every channel made by human contacts. The most sobering reflections come to mature men when they see the evil to which they yielded coming to new fruitage in their children. In all of Phillips Brooks' sermons there is no such tremendous passage as the paragraph in his Lenten Discourses in which he asks, What about the lives to which our misdeeds have given a fatal direction, though we ourselves have turned to God? What about our guilt for their sin? The slightest reflection upon such questions throws a vivid light on the sinfulness of sin.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE VISION OF JUDGMENT.

**Gen. 6 : 9—11 : 9.**

Several traditions of the deluge come down to us from different sources, and, if we need to do so, we may use them to confirm our confidence in the Biblical narrative. The physical aspects of the flood, of course, raise many interesting questions, but its moral features are much more important. Three great truths especially demand our attention: the fruitage of sin, the new start of the race, and the new tutelage.



**Babylonian Flood Tablet.**

Are the forces for righteousness that are symbolized in the declaration that man was made "in the image of God" sufficient to overcome the power of the sin which our first parents admitted into their hearts? Antecedently, perhaps, we might say that they were. But as the Biblical narrative declares, the early history of the race was a story of progressive deterioration. "And the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." In an exceptional man, like Noah, the inherent forces of goodness are strong enough to overcome bad tendencies, for a time; but, taking the race as a whole, the evil bent is overwhelming. And, as we shall see later, even Noah, the exceptional man, is not immune

from the common taint. The deluge was God's judgment upon the self-corruption of the race. It witnesses to the need of other forces than those involved in man's original endowment, if the race is to come into fellowship with God.

The result of the deluge was that human life made a new start in the earth on the basis of the very best that had been previously developed. A divinely ordered catastrophe, rather than an evolutionary process brought about a survival of the fittest. Noah stands for a new humanity starting from a new center.

At this point one naturally asks why God did not completely annihilate the race, and by another creative act repeople the earth with beings who would be righteous. The answer to that question is plain. If the new beings were endowed with the majestic prerogative of free-will they would be as much exposed to the peril of an evil choice as the race of Adam. Here we touch some of the ultimate problems of existence, and the region is full of mystery; but it is reasonable to suppose that free-will is such a splendid endowment of being that God confers it in full view of the peril it involves.

And this freedom is not only the supreme glory of man, but it is the basis of the supreme glory of God. God's highest glory could not be revealed in automata that could not sin, but in beings who, though they can sin, are responsive to the motives to righteousness, and by these motives are led, even out of sin, into vital fellowship with Himself. How beautifully this is brought out in our Lord's interpretation of the Eighth Psalm! That Psalm, which perhaps is more frequently alluded to in the New Testament than any other passage in the entire Old Testament, is a description of God's glory as seen in creation. Jesus, in quoting it, gives the Hebrew phrase a delicate turn, and makes it read: "Out of the mouths of babes comes the perfect praise" (Mt. 21:16). In other words, the tribute of a human heart to God, even of a babe,

is a greater manifestation of the glory of God than all the wonders of the heavens. That is so because the human heart is free. The creation of a new race would not have changed the problem, if that race was to be endowed with freedom of choice.

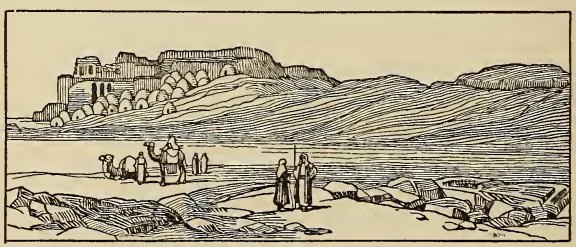
But, reading between the lines, it is easy to see that the new start of the race, after the deluge, was accompanied by a new tutelage. The inherent capacity of man to overcome evil has been disproved. Now God brings new motives to bear upon human life. We cannot possibly imagine a more impressive object lesson as to the evil desert of sin than the tremendous catastrophe that had overtaken the corrupt race. At the same time the marvelous deliverance of the survivors must have aroused in their hearts the deepest convictions as to the mercy of God. The promise that the flood should not be repeated; the assurances as to the stability of the course of nature; the removal of the curse upon the ground, and the safeguards thrown about human life are tokens that mankind is entering upon a new period. The goodness of the Noachian stock is not the sole factor for a better humanity. A new set of moral forces is brought to bear upon human souls. Human history now enters upon a new dispensation, which has as its characteristic mark the revelation of motives that appeal directly to the moral nature of man. We shall see, as we continue the study of the book of Genesis, how steadily this moral factor is made prominent until it clearly points forward to the supreme revelation in Jesus Christ.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE WAY OF FAITH.

Gen. 11 : 27—15 : 21.

The migration of Abraham from Chaldea to Canaan ranks as one of the most important events in the history of the race. If we except the fall of Adam and the crucifixion of Jesus, probably it is the most important, for it marks the beginning of a new spiritual order in the world. From the call of Abraham and his response to it came the separation of the Chosen People from the rest of mankind. To this people God imparted those large and vital conceptions of religious truth upon which Christianity rests. It is impossible to understand Christianity without Judaism, or Judaism without Abraham. In studying the call of Abraham, therefore, we stand at the fountain head of mankind's spiritual history. This Mesopotamian sheik was the progenitor and forerunner of all those who live the life of faith.



Haran, in Mesopotamia.

In its superficial aspects the migration of Abraham does not differ from that series of migrations which for thousands of years poured westward from the Euphrates valley. The leaders of these movements had substantially the same hopes that Abraham had—opportunity for agricultural expansion and for founding a prosperous, homogeneous race. We must seek the distinctive feature of the Abrahamic movement in

its inner temper and motive. What set Abraham going was something deeper than the spirit of adventure, or the secular attractions of the enterprise. To this man had come the conviction of the existence of the one true God. Relatively to the conceptions of his time he had formed an exceedingly noble conception of the divine character. He had become convinced that it was God's will that he should undertake this enterprise. From this point of view the migration of Abraham, though it had its secular aspects, was not at heart a secular movement at all, but a witness in the sphere of the secular to one man's belief in the one true God, and in his loyalty to Him.

And because belief in God and loyalty to Him inspired this migration, it is used so frequently by the Bible writers as a rather salient illustration of faith. The elements of belief and affection and obedience are so interwoven in faith that we fall into grievous error the moment we attempt to define it in the terms of one of these factors alone. It is a belief, but not a belief that is an end in itself, or that fails to control action; it is obedience, but not the servile compliance with a command; it is affection, but not an unintelligent emotion, or one ineffective for good.

The faith of Abraham, as shown in this migration, combined these three elements. First of all there was that marvelous conviction that somehow had arisen in his soul as to the existence of one God, and the excellence of His character. Then there was his obedience to the command of God, but it was not an obedience to a military order, which makes no human appeal except to the recognition of authority. Through great promises Abraham's love and confidence had been elicited and his view of the divine nature enlarged. That is why throughout the Scriptures commands are linked almost invariably to promises. Even the ten commandments, that may seem like a series of prohibitions, are not an exception to this statement, for we do not understand them in their reach

and far outlook until we read them in the light of the promises connected with them in the book of Deuteronomy. The promises of God evoke in us something deeper and more vital than a sense of authority, they awaken in our souls the rich human response of gratitude and love and trust.

Thus we see this great man of old, moved by a sense of God coming to him in command and promise, going forth whole-heartedly to do the thing that corresponded with his spiritual conviction. The surrenders of intellect and affection and will to the sufficiently attested revelation of God are the component parts of faith.

And, in leading Abraham to this rich, large faith, God did not scruple to address the whole man. A motive may be good, but not the highest, and we have to be trained to respond to the highest motives. God appeals to Abraham's desire for posterity and influence. "I will make of thee a great nation and make thy name great." He appeals to a higher motive still—his desire to serve others: "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." And, later, He appeals to the noblest motive of which we can conceive —the desire for fellowship with Himself: "I will be thy exceeding great reward." God's promises touched the whole range of his interests. But gradually the motives to which God appealed took their proper place in his life, as they do in every obedient life. There are few more interesting studies than to analyze the experiences of Abraham, which developed in him an increasing susceptibility to the highest motives. After the self-denial, following the rescue of Lot, he was ready for the supreme appeal and promise, and his whole life came to rest on it: "Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward" (Gen. 15:1).

## CHAPTER V.

### THE LIFE OF FAITH.

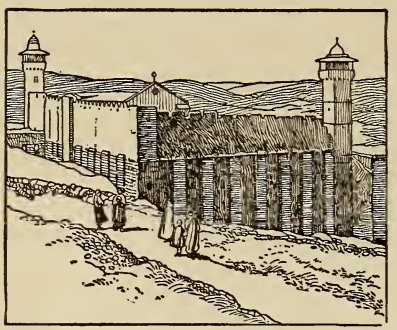
**Gen. 16 : 1—25 : 11; 26 : 1-5.**

It is one thing to undertake an enterprise, another to prosecute it to a successful end; one thing to make a high resolve, another to be faithful in all emergencies. The career of Abraham, "the Father of the Faithful," is not throughout perfectly consistent with fidelity to God. The journey into Egypt looks like a token of infirmity of purpose, while the prevarication to Pharaoh and the distrust of the fulfilment of the promise of posterity seen in the episode of Ishmael, disclose the man in his weaker moods. But we must not mistake the eddies in the current for the main stream. Taken as a whole, the career of Abraham is a resplendent illustration of a life upon a very high level. The man was tenacious of spiritual realities; he was controlled by his moral convictions; he believed in God; he lived the life of faith. His biographer gives us several interesting proofs of this.

One is his magnanimous attitude toward his nephew, Lot. There are men who, without any great natural capacity, become very prosperous, because they happen to be associated by blood relationship or by marriage with really able men. It was probably because Lot "went with Abram" that he had "flocks, and herds, and tents" (Gen. 13 : 5). Such men are apt to be quite insistent on their rights. The quarrel of the shepherds put Abraham in a delicate position. If he surrendered the best of the country to Lot, it looked as if he were subjecting the promise of God that he should inherit the land to a long postponement. But Abraham believed in God so thoroughly that he did not take that view of the case at all. To his mind the fulfilment of God's promises did not depend upon his sharpness in a bargain, or a close insistence on his rights, at the cost of a quarrel. He believed in God so much that he could cheerfully adopt the most magnanimous course, certain that

God's promise would not fail in the evolution of events.

A more striking proof of the same faith is given in the story of his conduct after the death of Sarah. Among the Orientals the desire to be buried with their kin is very strong. The sons of Jacob brought the body of their father back from Egypt to Palestine. The hosts of the exodus brought back the bones of Joseph to the fatherland. About half a century had passed since Abraham first entered the country that God promised should be his. And yet he did not possess a foot of ground in it. The long delay might well awaken distrust of the promise. In these circumstances the natural thing would be to carry the body of Sarah back to Chaldea—the land of their common kin. But Abraham believed God. He did not possess the land yet, but he believed that it would be his—the home of his race—and so he bought "the field of Machpelah before Mamre" for a burying place.



**Mohammedan Mosque over the Cave of Machpelah.**

**This cave was the burial place of the patriarchs. It is guarded very jealously by the Mohammedans, who will allow no Christians to see it. The above cut is from a stereograph copyrighted by Underwood & Underwood, N. Y.**

There is something indescribably fine about this. It is a comparatively simple thing to obey a command. The precept marks out the path. But to be as true to the inevitable sequences of your faith as if they were embodied in commands, requires an honest soul, moved by deep and noble insights. Many a man to-day fails to live the life of faith because he does not see

that the legitimate sequences of his faith are quite as binding on his conscience as any command of God.

And then, too, the faith of this man was revealed by his attitude toward the command to sacrifice Isaac. The moral difficulty that some have felt in connection with this incident is resolved when we realize that God did not command Abraham to do something repugnant to his moral ideas. For, at this time, Abraham, like the heathen around him, believed that human sacrifices were the most acceptable offerings that could be made to the Deity. And it is to be observed that in accommodating His command to the moral status of the man to whom it was given, God used it as a means of lifting the ideas of Abraham and his posterity to a higher level. Through this experience, in a flash, the sacredness of human life was revealed to Abraham and his race. The lesson was never forgotten. Henceforth the climax of apostasy from God was the worship of Molech by human sacrifices (Deut. 12: 31; Jer. 7: 31).

The shock this command gave to Abraham was not to his moral ideas, but to his ambition, his affections, his faith in God's promises. Against the hopes and trusts of a lifetime there was arrayed a command which he believed to be morally right, and he chose the way of obedience. He absolutely surrendered himself to the will of God. The sacrifice that God demanded was not the sacrifice of Isaac, but the spiritual sacrifice of Isaac's father, and, by Abraham's heroic willingness to sacrifice the hopes of a lifetime, he demonstrated the royal quality of his faith in God.

To-day the divine command is constantly running athwart our pleasures, our ambitions and the things upon which we have set our hearts. The man of faith is not the one who simply adheres to a statement of belief, but the man who subordinates his advantage and himself to a knowledge of God's will. Faith is the stuff out of which heroism is made. The men of faith are the heroes of the world.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE FORCES THAT TRANSFORM CHARACTER.

Gen. 25 : 19-34; 26 : 6—35 : 29.

Abraham had much to try his faith in the fulfilment of the Great Promise (Gen. 12: 2, 3), but, on the whole, his career was a noble illustration of confidence in God and loyalty to Him. The rather colorless personality of Isaac, to whom the Great Promise was renewed (Gen. 26: 3, 4) hardly corresponds with our notion of a successful founder of a race. Still, Isaac had the steadfast quality, which is so admirably outlined in the description, "The man waxed great, and grew more and more until he became very great" (Gen. 26: 13).

In Jacob, however, the son of Isaac, we have one of the commanding personalities of human history. He stamped himself so indelibly upon his descendants that the whole race is known as "the children of Israel." Few men have done so much for civilization and religion as the second son of Isaac.

The natural disposition of Jacob was singularly unlovely. He was sly, crafty, dishonest. Esau, in many ways, is far more attractive; but somehow, Esau's course, if not downward, is on a level. There is no force of moral progress in him, while Jacob's way is steadily upward. His sympathies broaden; he comes into alliance with God; his whole nature is so changed that he deserves a new name. We come to recognize the fitness of calling him no longer Jacob—"the heel-catcher," but Israel—"a Prince of the Lord."

Several forces contributed to this transformation. The great ones were the man's own sense of values, and the grace of God.

In the household of Isaac the ancestral birthright, belonging to the older son, must have been inseparably connected with the Great Promise. The promise could not be fulfilled except through the head of the family. The two lads, Esau and Jacob, may have heard of the Great Promise from the lips of Abraham him-

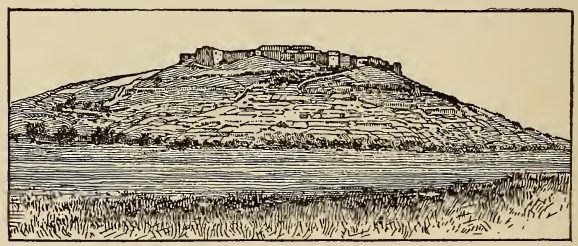
self, for they were sixteen years old when their grandfather died. Certainly they knew all about it from Isaac. Upon Esau the prospect of the great inheritance and destiny made no impression. Esau, it is said, "despised his birthright," and the reason is given in the epistle to the Hebrews (12:16, 17), where Esau is characterized as a "profane person," that is, secularly minded. He could easily reduce a spiritual inheritance to the common denominator of things good to eat.

Jacob's craft and dishonorable readiness to take advantage of his brother's ignoble mood are not to be passed by without severe condemnation, but the fact cannot be overlooked that Jacob valued supremely what Esau regarded so flippantly. Jacob's methods were contemptible, but his sense of the worth of the birthright deserves all praise. With all his faults he had a spiritual eye. He could prize things that he could not eat. There is a vast hope, even for a man like Jacob, who has some sense of spiritual values. There is something in such a man to which an effective spiritual appeal can be made. But for men like Esau, no matter how generous and attractive they may be, there is no hope, so long as they do not believe in anything they cannot see and touch and eat. Life to Esau will mean the hunt, the feast, the headship of a tribe. Life to Jacob will mean self-revelation, the subordination of lower values to higher, and a divine unrest that finds peace only in God. There was a subtle, mighty force, in the very constitution of Jacob's soul, making him a better man.

And the helpful, loving presence of God—"God's grace," we call it to-day—came to Jacob through the channel of this desire. We read the narrative of Jacob's experience at Beth-el with surprise. We say: "Here was a man who deceived his father, and wronged his brother, and God gave him a revelation like that, and renewed to him the Great Promise. What are we to make of it? Does it show that

righteousness is not a condition of enjoying the favor of God?"

This very objection brings into view a primary feature of the religion of the Bible. In spite of his sin, Jacob had a true desire, and that desire became a ladder down which angels thronged. Every religion except that of the Bible says, "Do good, practice righteousness that you may win the favor of God." Christianity says, "Do good, practice righteousness, because you have the favor of God." It is primarily and essentially a revelation of God's grace to sinful men. "God commendeth his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). The vision of Beth-el was not a rebuke or a sen-



Modern Bethel.

tence of judgment. Jacob's own heart could be trusted for that. It was the disclosure of a high calling, a noble privilege, a splendid destiny. To the sinful fugitive, sleeping on a pillow of stones, the Great Promise was renewed. Jacob's heart received a new uplift and inspiration, and, after that night at Beth-el, he was never again the same man.

The experience at Peniel, twenty and more years later, was a fitting supplement to the vision at Beth-el. He was returning to the promised land confident in his sagacity and resources. But the fruitage of his old sin in the heart of Esau threatens him, and he has to reckon with God as well as with his broth-

er. In the night watches, wrestling with the mysterious stranger, and becoming wounded and helpless, he learned that if he entered into the Great Promise at all, it must be by receiving it as a gift from the hand of God. It was too vast a thing to be won by his own strategy and resources, but it was not too vast a thing for God to bestow of His grace upon the sinful cripple. No wonder that when the man began to take some measure of the grace of God toward him, he was thoroughly transformed. And, in a night, as a climax of the revelation of grace that began at Bethel, he received that new name, which, from its high spiritual significance, has since been applied to the whole Israel of God.

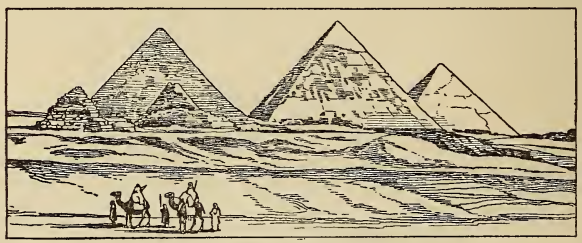
## CHAPTER VII.

### MAN'S PLANS AND GOD'S PURPOSE.

Gen. chs. 37-50; Ex. 1 : 1-7.

Not long ago the question was raised in a company of eminent literary men, "What is the best short story ever written?" It was agreed almost unanimously that the highest place belonged to the story of Joseph, as told in Genesis, and next to it in literary merit was the book of Jonah.

The story of Joseph, however, not only belongs to literature of the very first order, but it illustrates truths of the first importance.



**The Great Pyramids of Gizeh.**

These pyramids were many centuries old at the time of Joseph and must have been often seen by him.

It was a most fortunate thing for Israel that far back near the origin of the race, there stood forth such an admirable human character as Joseph. The career of Joseph is unique among the biographies of the Scripture in being without reproach or flaw. From whatever angle his personality is viewed, it reflects light and beauty, and, as you peer into its crystal depths, it reveals mysterious qualities of grace and strength. Thousands and thousands of Jewish and Puritan mothers have been so impressed with the brightness and charm, the purity and strength of the child of Jacob and Rachel, that they have named their first-born sons Joseph. We can hardly overestimate

our indebtedness in this country to the noble character of George Washington. His memory is at once an inspiration and a rebuke. A blessing like that came to Israel because a good and a great man, like Joseph, stood near the fountain head of the national life.

And the career of this singularly attractive man illustrated in a vivid way two central truths—the power of faith to sweeten and strengthen character, and the over-ruling providence of God.

When the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews speaks of the faith of Joseph he takes a somewhat peculiar incident to illustrate it. He says: "By faith Joseph, when his end was nigh, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel; and gave com-

**A Family of Asiatics Going to Egypt.**

**From a wall painting of Joseph's time.**

mandment concerning his bones" (Heb. 11:22). But the writer's insight did not fail him. The fact that when Joseph was dying the promise of God that his race should inherit Canaan was uppermost in his thought; that he should have so thoroughly believed that his people would return that he desired, as a last request, that they should carry his bones with them, was a resplendent example of the far-reaching outlook of faith in God.

This is the key to Joseph's character. His story is full of trouble and failure and bitter disappointment; but the little child who hears it read cannot miss the note of serenity and cheer that runs through it. What is the secret of it but this? The man had, and the

writer makes us feel that he had, a confidence in God that nothing could appall. If, at several points in his life he had attempted to interpret the purpose of God for him, we can see how grievously astray his conclusion would have been. He could not possibly have seen how events were working to put him near the throne, in a position to be the deliverer of his brothers, who had been seeking his life. Before the climax almost every feature of his career is mysterious and inexplicable. After it has reached its end we can see that part has been related to part with delicate and perfect adjustment. The temptation to reason that the pit, or the unjust accusation, or the dungeon, or the ingratitude of his fellows was the end in the light of which his life was to be construed, was stronger and more subtile than any enticement addressed to his senses. But he was patient and cheerful; he did not judge anything "before the time" (1 Cor. 4: 5), and he was confident that he was in the hands of a good God.

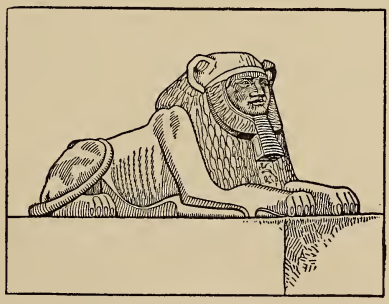
This is the open secret of a cheerful temper. We can always make ourselves miserable by interpreting God and life from the point of view of our overthrows and disappointments, or we can have our hearts filled with serenity and cheer because we are willing to read the volume of experience to its close, in the faith that God's purposes are those of goodness and love.

But we misread the story if we think that it teaches that by industry or honestry or skill alone Joseph rose to the great position that enabled him to care for his brethren, and to provide a refuge for his race until it was stong enough to become a nation. No possible effort or industry on Joseph's part could have suggested to him the correct interpretation of the prisoners' dreams, or could have brought it about that his name should be presented to Pharoah's attention at "the psychological moment." What we call "the chapter of accidents" played a very large part in Joseph's life. Events combined and conspired in a marvelous

way for his advancement. But Pharoah had a better explanation than our "chapter of accidents" to account for Joseph's success (Gen. 41: 38). The king saw that here was a man who was directed and used by a Higher Power.

"It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. 10: 23). Behind all our plans and activities there are the purposes of God. The very things that seem to thwart those purposes, like the evil devices of Joseph's brothers, He can overrule and make them important steps toward the fulfilment of His aims; the trivial accidental circumstance, utterly beyond human control, may play like a wheel into His plan; and the best and noblest efforts of man may receive from their association with His purpose a significance and influence wholly incalculable by the wit of man.

Israel, as we know, often looked back upon the career of Joseph with gratitude and wonder. His life still interprets to us the workings of Providence in the experience of men and of nations.



Egyptian Human-headed Sphinx.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE RESOURCES OF GOD.

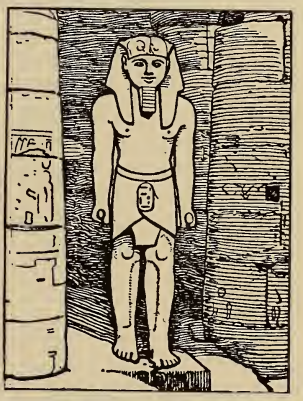
Ex. 1 : 8—4 : 31.

For several centuries the descendants of Abraham found just the conditions in Egypt that enabled the tribe to develop steadily and happily into the nation. At length the time came for this people to begin an independent existence. It would have been wholly impossible for the most studious observer to anticipate the method by which God would accomplish this end. There was nothing in the situation, as it had developed during hundreds of years, to lead one to suppose that the future of Israel was not inextricably bound to Egypt. But the resources of God are not limited by the forecasts of men. Unexpected and simple means are at the disposal of God to reverse the calculations of the wisest men. God brought Israel out of Egypt—brought the nation to birth—through the agency of two men, who did not dream, until the last moment, when the clock of destiny struck, that they were fulfilling the divine purpose.

The first of these men was Pharaoh, king of Egypt. From the point of view of practical statesmanship the situation presented to Pharaoh a most interesting problem. His policy was directed to two ends—he wanted to check the increasing strength and influence of the Hebrews in Egypt, and at the same time to keep them in the country. They were too valuable a source of wealth to be forfeited. The means he took to accomplish these ends were natural enough, but fatuous, and the result was the exact opposite to what he intended.

Pharaoh, like most absolute rulers, thought he could do anything he chose by brute force. His policy closely resembled that of the present Russian government in dealing with the Jews. Now oppression

and persecution can accomplish wonders if they are thorough to the point of extermination. But the problem of preventing a high-spirited, resourceful subject race from exercising its legitimate influence, while it is exploited in the interests of the ruling people, is insoluble. It fails to-day in Russia just as it failed Egypt. The results of this policy in Egypt were the invariable ones. The ties, which had been forming for centuries between the Israelites and their adopted country, were ruptured, and they themselves were unified in a common hatred of the government, and in a common desire to leave the country and establish an independent existence. Thus the short-sighted policy of Pharaoh paved the way for the fulfilment of God's plan to bring His people out of Egypt.

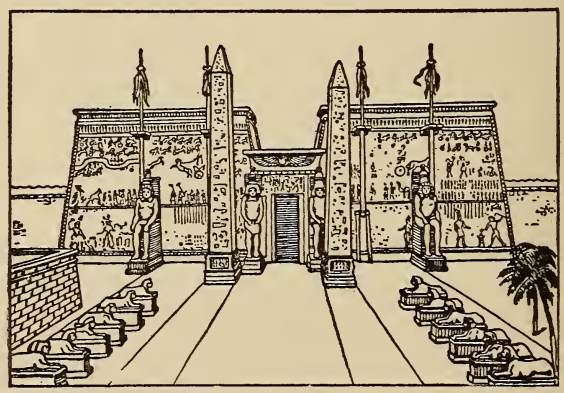


**Colossal Statue of Rameses II.**

The Pharaoh of the oppression. This statue stands in the doorway of a temple at Thebes.

The second agency that made the separation of Israel from Egypt successful was the providential man—Moses. It did not matter how numerous the Hebrews were, or how ready they were to break away from Egypt, their outlook was hopeless without a wise, strong leader. There are infinite possibilities in a great soul. We say beforehand that a certain situation is impossible, a certain problem is insoluble; the right man comes, and all difficulties vanish. The most precious thing in the world is not wealth or combinations of men, but it is a human soul of insight, genius and devotion. There may be to-day playing in our village streets, attending our Sunday school, a lad who will give the Christian church the

strongest impulse it has received since the days of Augustine. God has given the modern world great inventors and discoverers, great financiers, great organizers of material things. May it not be that He will give us a religious genius who shall help make the life of the spirit dominant over the tremendous material forces of our time? We cannot tell how God will fulfil His purposes, but the narrative gives us a hint of the vast resources locked up in human personalities which are liberated by a touch of God's finger. He used a woman's wit to rescue the child whose personality and genius overshadows all the forces of his time, not even excepting the throne of Egypt. When the daughter of Pharaoh was moved to save the life of the Hebrew babe she was setting in motion a stream of influence that not only was to make a nation, but to fashion institutions that mould human life to-day in Europe and America.



The Temple at Luxor, Restored.

And then, too, we see that God not only sent this great soul of Moses into the world, but He trained him in providential ways for the vast service he was to render Israel. The greatest man in human his-

tory was not extemporized or suffered to develop his powers by chance. His education was arranged to the minutest detail. The years of study in the Egyptian temple schools, and of personal familiarity with the leading men of his time; the long period of isolation from the world, and of silent brooding upon the problems of life and society and government; the teachings of Jehovah learned from a Hebrew mother, and the meditation upon His character and way, all combined to form that massive character of Moses.

At last the call came. Up to this, Moses did not at all understand the purpose of his life. Like most of us, he did not even know what he was fit for. At first he was reluctant to obey the call, but at the burning bush he knew that the hour for which he was made had come. The clock struck. The purpose of the great gifts and of the providential training was evident. All that there was in his nature and experience crystallized. And when, in obedience to the command of God, Moses stands before Pharaoh, we see that the providential man has come.

Through the short-sighted and self-willed policy of Pharaoh, and through the great capacity and magnificent experience of Moses, God opened the way for the deliverance of Israel from Egypt—a nation was to be born.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE MIGHTY DELIVERANCE.

Ex. 5 : 1—15 : 21.

It was no easier for the Israelites than it is for men of our time to discern the true significance of events near at hand. Of course, certain dramatic features of the exodus at once impressed them; but it was only after years had passed that they saw the political and religious aspects of the great event, and that, on the one hand, it was the birth of a nation, and, on the other, a revelation of surpassing moment of the character of Jehovah and of His relation to His people. In the light of this fact we do well to consider just what this great deliverance came to signify in the spiritual consciousness of Israel.

**Portrait Statue of Merneptah. The Pharaoh of the exodus.**

For one thing it meant a vast enlargement of their conception of God. During their life in Egypt they may not have realized that the God they worshiped—the God of their fathers—was more than a tribal god, but after the exodus they could not ignore the fact that the policy of the strong, resolute, and able king of Egypt had absolutely broken down in his defiance of the command of Jehovah; and they could not fail to see that the very things which were supposed to be under the protection of the gods of Egypt had been used to plague the Egyptians. The evidence was incontrovertible that neither the great king of Egypt, nor the gods of Egypt, could withstand Jeho-

vah (Ex. 12:12; 15:11; 18:11). The time might be far distant before any except the noblest souls in Israel could say:

> **"All the gods of the peoples are idols:**
> **But Jehovah made the heavens." Ps. 96:5.**

But Israel took a long step toward that supreme recognition when the significance of the deliverance from Egypt sank into her heart.

And beyond this, the exodus, accomplished by such marvelous displays of divine power, aroused a new confidence in Jehovah. While Israel's thought of God was enlarged, her appreciation of the care of God for her was deepened. Of course, one might point to the murmurings soon after the Red Sea had been passed, repeated often in the wanderings, to show that the great event did not awaken any abiding gratitude:

> **"Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt;**
> **They remembered not the multitude of thy lovingkindnesses,**
> **But were rebellious at the sea, even at the Red Sea." Ps. 106:7.**

Still, when we look at Hebrew history in the large, we see that a new sense of the goodness of God stole into the heart of Israel. Jehovah, who had saved His people by a mighty hand, loved them. They had a firm basis of confidence in Him. How beautifully this is brought out in the book of Deuteronomy: "When thou goest forth to battle against thine enemies, and seest horses, and chariots, and a people more than thou, thou shalt not be afraid of them; for Jehovah thy God is with thee, who brought thee up out of the land of Egypt" (Deut. 20:1).

**Egyptian Chariots.**

It is interesting to see how those two great proph-

ets of consolation, Ezekiel and Hosea, use the fact that God brought Israel out of Egypt as the convincing reason for believing that He will not forsake His people, but always deal with them in mercy and goodness. Indeed, there is much to show that the deliverance from Egypt occupied a place in the life and thought of the Hebrew people like that occupied by the cross of Christ in the later revelation. The Jews always regarded the exodus as a supreme disclosure of the love of God. And the light of the great event still irradiates the hearts of the Hebrews in every land in which the passover is kept.

And naturally enough Israel's attitude toward this event, which so enlarged her conception of God and deepened her confidence in Him, came to be the measure of sin and of righteousness. A great moral experience, especially a great deliverance, always carries with it a new moral standard. That is why the prophets so often introduce their rebukes by the reflection that Jehovah, whose law the people have despised, is the God who brought them out of Egypt with a mighty hand. To take only one instance from many: When the writer of the book of Kings seeks to give us an impression of the sin of Israel that justified the Assyrian captivity, he says: "And it was so, because the children of Israel had sinned against Jehovah their God, who brought them up out of the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt" (2 Ki. 17:7). In Judaism, just as in Christianity, the soul's attitude toward the revelation of God's grace measured human sin.

But there is another side to this matter. The Hebrews constantly found in this great deliverance the strong and blessed motive to righteousness. The ten commandments do not rest for their authority and motive upon arbitrary fiat. The sentence which introduces them shoots through them all a ray of the divine love: "I am Jehovah thy God, who brought

thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage" (Ex. 20: 1). It is the God who delivered Israel from the Egyptian bondage who gives Israel His law. That makes the law also a revelation of love, and brings with the law the highest and holiest motive for obedience to it.

No one can ponder the significance that the exodus came to have in the spiritual life of Israel without a fresh conviction of its historical reality, and of its far-reaching importance in the religious life of the world. It is so great an epoch in the story of human redemption that St. John tells us that the song of Moses will be sung with the song of the Lamb to the harps of God by the sea of glass (Rev. 15: 2, 3).

## CHAPTER X.

### MAKING A NATION.

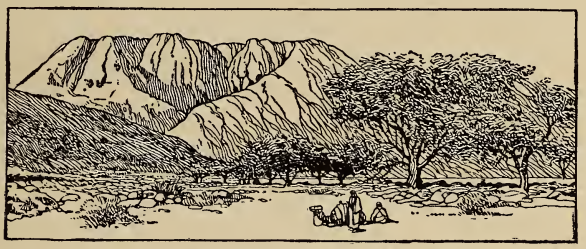
**Ex. 15 : 22—34 : 35.**

The control and organization of the multitude, delivered from Egypt, was a vast enterprise. It is certainly an exaggeration to speak of those who took part in the exodus as "a horde of slaves." Such a phrase is totally misleading, if it suggests a mass of ignorant humanity like that which Alexander II freed from bondage in Russia in 1861, and Abraham Lincoln emancipated in our own country two years later. The Hebrews had not been enslaved in Egypt for any great length of time, and their servitude was of a totally different type from that which prevailed in the West Indies and in the southern part of the United States during the first half of the nineteenth century. The Hebrews had never lost their own noble traditions, and they had absorbed something of Egyptian civilization.

But, whatever the degree of cultivation the Hebrews had reached, the task of Moses and his associates was vast almost beyond computation. The people lacked almost all the elements requisite for national life, except the consciousness of a common origin, and the memory of a common deliverance from oppression. The work of Moses was to transform a multitude into a nation, a lump of clay into a block of marble, so homogeneous and elastic that great impulses and ideals would be transmitted and vibrate through the whole mass. On the whole, in spite of many failures the task was successfully accomplished. The homogeneity and vitality of the Hebrew race is a perpetual witness to the great achievement.

We can readily discriminate several forces which contributed to the success of this enterprise.

One was the conviction, impresed upon the whole people, that God was with them, and that they were wholly dependent upon Him. We might think that the deliverance from Egypt, by itself, would be enough to fasten this conviction, but, as the writer of the one hundred and sixth Psalm sees so clearly, men forget even great providences. In the weeks immediately following the exodus the sense of dependence on God was deepened by a series of remarkable events. The sweetening of the waters of Marah (Ex. 15:23-25); the giving of the quails and the manna (Ex. ch. 16); the gushing of the waters from the rock at Meribah (Ex. 17:1-7), and the defeat of



*From a photograph by Professor George L. Robinson.*

**The Wilderness near Sinai.**

the Amalekites at Rephidim (Ex. 17:8-16) were vivid evidences that God was with them. To be sure, all doubts and murmurings were not banished by these deliverances. There was still room in their natures for the surprising infidelity disclosed in the episode of the golden calf (Ex. ch. 32). But there are abundant indications that these great displays of divine power in their behalf created a common conviction of dependence upon God that unified the people, making them conscious of a common life and a common destiny.

We see another contribution toward making the nation in the administrative system introduced by Moses, at the suggestion of Jethro (Ex. ch. 18). An

onlooker often sees more of the game than the players; and that was the case with Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, who seems to have been a man of rare good sense and practicality. If the fact that the suggestion came from Jethro seems to detract from the genius of Moses, let us reflect that Moses showed capacity of a high order in not rejecting a good idea, simply because it was not his own.

The great advantage of this articulated system of administration was not simply that it left Moses free for his great tasks—that, of course, was indispensable, and it was the point that especially appealed to Jethro—but it sharply discriminated between the legislative and judicial functions, keeping the former in the hands of Moses, as the minister of God; it set a most excellent standard of official competency (Ex. 18: 21), indeed, a better one could hardly be framed, and it made the administrative mesh fine enough to bring the law into relation with every individual Israelite. It is hardly possible to overstate the influence of this system in bringing order out of chaos, in articulating every individual to the life of the whole people, and so creating a national spirit and life.

But the transcendent force in making the nation was the covenant with Jehovah. If we are to conceive of the idea of making this covenant as the thought of Moses it is a mark of colossal genius. But in all this matter we cannot discriminate between the thought of Moses and the suggestion of God. As in every worthy career, the human effort and the divine inspiration are inextricably blended (Ex. 35: 30-35; Is. 54: 16).

The very idea that the Israelites, by the votes of individuals, could make a covenant with Jehovah that would bind the whole people, gave every man in Israel a new sense of his relationship to the common life (Ex. 19: 7, 8). All that in modern times we imagine

that the suffrage can do in elevating the conception of citizenship, and in fusing the individual into the common life of the nation, was done, at a stroke, by submitting the acceptance of the covenant with Jehovah to the vote of the people.

And more than this, the covenant in which the law was embodied brought home to every man's business and bosom his personal responsibility. For the welfare of the whole people was dependent upon the fidelity of individuals to the law of Jehovah. And the promises as to the prosperity and future greatness of Israel, if the whole people kept the law of Jehovah, who had "brought them out of Egypt with a strong hand and a mighty arm," kindled the patriotic and religious devotion of every Israelite to Jehovah and to the nation.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE SECRET OF FAILURE.

Num. 10 : 29—14 : 45.

In reading the history of Israel we have something of the feeling with which mature men review their own lives. They wonder that they were so stupid or perverse as not to keep right on in the best ways; that they have so often done that which was foolish and sinful. After the giving of the law at Sinai and the ratification of the covenant, the Israelites had only to follow the divine indications, in a spirit of faith and of loyalty to their pledge. Their murmurings against the privations of the march, in total forgetfulness of the hardships of Egypt (Num. 14: 1-4), and in the plot of Aaron and Miriam against Moses, in which apparently many of the people joined (Num. 12: 1, 2), are features of the narrative thorougly true to human nature.

At the same time we must not overlook the happy episodes of this period, which are equally true to the brighter side of human life. One is the total identification of Moses with the welfare of the people (Num. 11: 11; 14: 13-25); the other is the charming disclosure of the character of Hobab, who was immovable to an appeal addressed to his self-interest (Num. 10: 29), but responded at once to the idea that he could be of service to others (Num. 10: 31).

In the treatment the people gave to the reports of the spies we have one of those pivotal and tragic decisions which still interprets human experience.

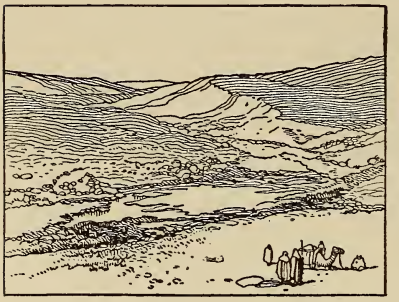
To begin with, it illustrates how the temper and bias of men color their conclusions. The ten spies, on the one hand, and Caleb and Joshua on the other, reasoned from the same set of facts, but the two reports reached opposite conclusions. Lack of faith, inability to take anything into account but the hard

material facts of the situation, made the ten see nothing but giants and walled towns. Caleb and Joshua saw the same vast difficulties, but they had genuine insight into the meaning of the deliverance from Egypt, and confidence in the promise of God to give them this land. From that point of view they could see nothing but a glorious country which Israel was "well able to overcome."

To-day one man says that from the facts of nature and life he reaches conclusions which banish cheer from the world; while another sees that which brightens hope, and exalts the possibilities of the human soul. The difference between the two observers may not be in the strength of their understandings, but in the subtile insights and persuasions they bring to the study of the facts. The biography of George John Romanes shows how the insight of faith could transform the skeptical author of the *"Candid Examination of Theism"* into the adoring believer, who wrote the *"Thoughts on Religion."*

Again this episode in the life of Israel indicates how the very hardships and necessities of life may be incitements to faith. With their Egyptian masters behind them the Israelites did not demur at crossing the Red Sea and incurring the perils certain to follow. But when they were in circumstances of comparative comfort they caught at the majority report of the spies as a pretext for not crossing Jordan and entering at once upon their heritage in Canaan. It is a singular circumstance that the Pilgrim Fathers, in the midst of starvation, pestilence and death, never lost their faith in the immortality of the soul, the reality of the spiritual life, and the loving providence of God. While, not infrequently, we find those who, in the midst of plenty and happiness, become skeptical as to these essential features of the Christian revelation (Deut. 8: 10, 11). Our difficulties and necessities often contribute more than we think for to our spiritual life. And this is not wholly

or chiefly because they discipline us in patience, but because they encourage us to the ventures of faith.



*From a photograph by Prof. G. L. Robinson.*

Kadesh-barnea.

The place where the Israelites were turned back into the wilderness.

And more than this, what a picture the story presents of the losses of unfaith! The Israelites, for want of faith, refused to go up and possess the land, and were turned back into the wilderness for nearly forty years. When their children came back to the very place where their fathers had halted, a new spirit moved them, and they marched forward into the promised land. The fathers wasted the best of their lives, spending them in the wilderness, instead of in Canaan, because they lacked faith. Their want of insight into their own history and of confidence in God was enormously expensive.

We speak often of the losses that men sustain through lack of knowledge, judgment or capacity. The losses that come through lack of spiritual vision and obedience to God are even greater. We keep repeating the experience of the Hebrews. The promised land is just before us, we take counsel of our fears; we judge simply on the basis of what reports itself through the five senses; we neglect our nobler intuitions—the delicate but mighty promptings through which the word of the Lord comes—and then we go back into the wilderness. After years have passed we come back to the very place where we were. There are the same giants and the same walled towns. Then we say, "I will obey," and, lo, the

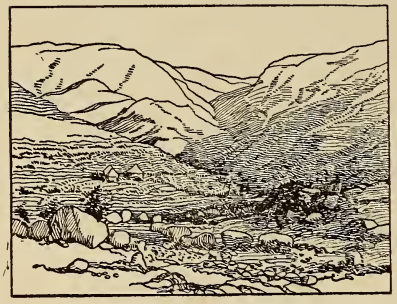
giants are not nearly so terrible, nor the towns so strong, when we come to close quarters with them. We have obeyed at last, and found that God is with those who have faith and act upon it, and we have entered Canaan. But the waste of it! The happy years we might have been there before! Our lack of faith kept us in the wilderness.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE DISCIPLINE OF ISRAEL.

Num. chs. 16, 17; 20 : 1—21 : 9.

The reader of the narrative describing Israel's thirty-eight years of wandering in the wilderness feels at once like asking, What did this experience do for the nation? Were there any compensating advantages to Israel in the hardships and disappointments involved in keeping the generation that left Egypt out of the land of promise?



*From a photograph.*

**Scene in the Wilderness near Kadesh-barnea.**

An important thing that the experiences of the wilderness did for the people was to reveal them to themselves. The Scriptures often dwell upon this purpose of trial and suffering. Such experiences show what is in men—the real constituents of their characters (Deut. 8: 2; 1 Pet. 1: 7). The analogy is with the process of assaying, which reveals the proportion of valuable elements in the mass of ore. Undoubtedly, the generation that left Egypt had enjoyed many of the advantages of a high civilization, in spite of the fact that under the recent Pharaohs they had been in servitude. But, whatever else they knew or did not know, they were ignorant of themselves. Probably they did not imagine that there was in them such a spirit of faction and envy as to threaten the whole future of the great enterprise (Num. 16: 2, 3). Probably they did not dream that their ingratitude and

blindness to the significance of past deliverances and their distrust of God could lead them to such lengths as the murmurings at Meribah (Num. 20: 3-5), and during the journey around Edom (Num. 21: 5, 6). The testing of events revealed even in Moses an unsuspected weakness (Num. 20: 11, 12).

Such disclosures of our real natures, elicited through the experiences of life, have a most important office in moral training. They take away self-conceit and the ungirt habit. They make men, who are sound at heart, humble and vigilant. It is a pitiful thing for men or a nation to confront great emergencies without the just appreciation of their limitations and defects which can only be gained in the actual experiences of life. Israel had defects enough through all her history, but she could not have rendered her vast service to humanity without the self-revelation of the forty years in the wilderness.

The Scriptures attribute another result to hardship and trial. They tell us that such experiences not only reveal character, but that they purge the nature from gross elements, just as the process of refining eliminates the dross from the ore, leaving the pure metal (Job 23: 10; Zech. 13: 9; Heb. 12: 11). We can see this result clearly in the life of Israel. The outcome of the mutinies against Moses and Aaron (Num. 16: 32, 35, 47-50), of the murmurings at Meribah (Num. 20: 8-11), and near Edom (Num. 21: 6) strongly impressed upon the whole people the evil of a factious, envious, ungrateful spirit, and helped to purify the life of the nation. Had the disposition of Korah, for example, dominated in Israel there could have been no loyal co-operation of the whole body of the Israelites in entering upon their heritage. The spirit that subordinates the conceit or interest of the individual to the welfare of the whole would have been entirely wanting. The compact hosts that confronted the Canaanites and crossed Jordan and surrounded Jericho were not welded together by brute force, they were

solidified by experiences that purified and unified their moral natures in those long years of the wilderness.

And then, too, we can hardly miss seeing that those years of wandering brought them a larger knowledge of God, that blossomed in a deeper confidence in Him. The way the people treated the reports of the spies showed that their distrust of God unfitted them to possess Canaan (Num. 14:1-4). There are lessons not to be learned from sermons or books. They are taught by events, by the great experiences of human life that force their significance into the inmost recesses of the soul, so that the whole man is interpenetrated with it. A new revelation of the meaning of the sovereignty of God came to Israel in the fearful penalty upon Korah and his sympathizers; in the plague of serpents; in the result of the self-sufficiency of Moses, and in the beautiful wonder of the blossoming rod. A new revelation of the grace of Jehovah came to them in the forbearance of God, notwithstanding their sins; in the constant supply of the manna; in the deliverance from the Canaanites; in the gushing of the water from the rock, and in the provision by which a sight of the brazen serpent brought rescue from death. These last events so deeply impressed St. John and St. Paul that in the New Testament the smitten rock (1 Cor. 10:4) and the brazen serpent (Jo. 3:14, 15) become types of the relationship of the Redeemer to men.

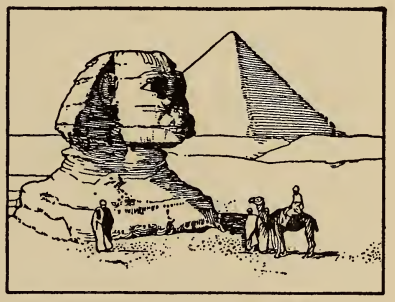
When we compare the Israel that crossed the Red Sea, under Moses, with the Israel that crossed the Jordan, under Joshua, we see a vast progress in the elements that make for individual and national character. The self-revelation, the purification, the knowledge of God and trust in Him that came from the experiences of those long years are the factors that wrought the change. The benefit was worth all it cost.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### REVIEW OF CHAPTERS 1-12.

Several commanding truths emerge from the background of the vast historic process which stretches from the creation of the world to the eve of the conquest of Canaan by the Chosen People.

One of these, which is unmistakable even to the most cursory reader of the narrative, is that the historic movement is divinely controlled to the fulfilment of a dominant purpose. Broadly stated, that purpose is the evolution of a nation that shall bear witness in its constitution, its ideals and its influence in the world to the sovereignty and character of God. In the preceding chapters we have traced step by step the accomplishment of this purpose. At the beginning we have the choice of the stock, by a process of progressive elimination. The stock of Abel is chosen, then that of Noah, then that of Shem. At last from the Semitic race there is a selection. The great personality of Abraham emerges.



**The Sphinx and the Great Pyramid.**

The Abrahamic stock develops, like the trunk of a tree, in the careers of his son and grandson, Isaac and Jacob, and the life of Jacob expands, like the trunk into branches, into "the children of Israel"—the nucleus of the future nation. From this point the divine action is not so immediate. The purpose is accomplished by the providential control of events, in which the human will is allowed free play. The selling of Joseph as a slave

resulted in bringing the family of Jacob into Egypt, where the stock had the most favorable opportunities for development in the environment of a high civilization. The oppression of the Egyptians, which did not take place for several centuries, weaned the people from the land in which at one time it seemed as if they were permanently fixed. A remarkable combination of events gave the Israelites in Moses the best equipped leader that could be imagined. The very defects and weaknesses of the people were overruled to impart the self-control, the sense of loyalty, the faculty of co-operation and above all the faith in Jehovah, which fitted them to enter upon their heritage in Canaan.

We see here only what impresses the historical student who undertakes the survey of any extended period—the providential factor, through which events conspire to an end, but in this record it is writ large. It thrusts itself upon us. We cannot escape it. Through the will of man the will of God was accomplished.

Another salient teaching of this study is that the revelation of spiritual truths was progressive. We lack the materials for a correct appraisement of the spiritual conceptions current in the world before Abraham, or, for that matter, in the patriarchal period. What we do know leads us to suppose that the moral and religious ideas of these periods were rudimentary. The idea of human sacrifice, for example, does not seem to have shocked the moral nature of Abraham, though it tortured his human affection. It seems to be reasonable to suppose that the Israelites largely shared the religious conceptions of the Egyptians. At least, it is hardly possible that they were not influenced by them. But almost at once after the exodus the people under Moses received the Decalogue and the "Book of the Covenant" (Ex. 20:22—23:33). It is quite impossible for us to exaggerate the advance this revelation made over the current

ethical and religious ideas of the ancient world. Even the Christian revelation has not superseded the fundamental ideas of these codes. But Israel's appreciation of the significance of its own law was a matter of slow growth. Some of our best insights come through experience and events. It was so with Israel. The judgments and deliverances of God were parables, and through them the people as a whole came to nobler apprehensions of the character of God and of their duties toward Him and toward one another. When the Israelites entered Canaan some of their spiritual conceptions were still crude. They were to be expanded and purified by the magnificent ministry of the prophets, but the light had been increasing ever since the people of Israel left Egypt. The religious conceptions of the hosts marshalled under Joshua were far in advance of the ideas that ruled the people who left Egypt under Moses.

Still further, the history of this whole period affords an inspiring illustration of the fashioning of national character. Already, at the entrance upon Canaan, in the midst of shifting lights and confused forms the image of the typical Israel is beginning to emerge. The forces that produce national character are essentially identical in every age, but here we see them in distinct, broad outline. First we have the good stock—the sound heredity, then the providential guidance, by which even the most untoward events are overruled to the service of the nation; then the spiritual illumination that lifts life to a new level by its worthier conception of God and of the relations of men to one another; then the experiences that verify and interpret the revelation and test and purify character. And behind and above all is the purpose of the Most High to realize the ideals of righteousness in the life of this people.

By such forces and processes God was fashioning Israel. Judging by later events we may be tempted to say that the great work was a failure, but we

do well always to remember that this nation, thus formed and compacted, has given the race many of its noblest spiritual ideals and impulses, and from this people there came, in the fulness of time, the Redeemer.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE DISCIPLINE IN RIGHTEOUSNESS.

**Num. 21 : 10—24 : 25; ch. 32; Deut. ch. 34.**

The Israelites found that the spirit of courageous trust in God was honored by the victory over the Amorites (Num. 21 : 21-25) and the overthrow of Og, king of Bashan (Num. 21 : 33-35). In the narrative which describes what took place between these triumphs and the crossing of the Jordan, we find a large variety of events, but the fact that reduces them to unity, and makes them illustrate a single great principle is that, in this victorious march from the wilderness to Canaan, God was constantly teaching the Israelites, by the vivid instruction of events, that He was not only holy, but that He demanded righteousness in His people.

It is not clear whether or not the episode of Balaam was known to the Israelites at the time it occurred. The transaction took place among their enemies, but they soon learned about it, and it became a part of their national history. The inconsistencies of Balaam's character throw a light into some of the darkest recesses of human nature. He was a man of intellectual and spiritual discernment. He saw the moral beauty of righteousness, but he wished to get the rewards of iniquity, while persuading himself that he had escaped its guilt. When he discovered that he could not cajole the Most High, he appears to have set himself deliberately to corrupt the Israelites by idolatrous worship and practices, so that a righteous God could not bless them, and the desire of Balak might be fulfilled (Num. 31 : 16; Rev. 2 : 4). It is no accident that three of the most discriminating preachers the English-speaking world has produced—Bishop Butler, John Henry Newman, and Frederick W. Robertson—should have based great sermons upon this perplexing

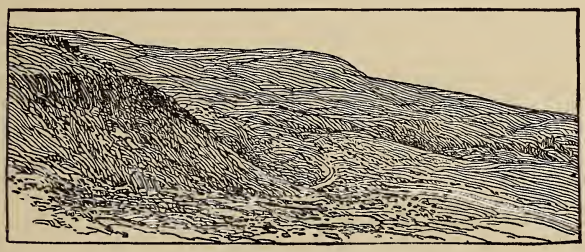
and fascinating incident in Hebrew history, that so clearly illustrates the deceitfulness of the human heart, and the folly of tampering with wickedness.

If the Israelites began to imagine that they could presume that Jehovah, who had given them great victories, would be tolerant of evil in them, they were taught a startling lesson in the destruction of those who had been engaged in the idolatries of the Moabites (Num. 25: 5, 9). The judgment upon the worshipers of the golden calf (Ex. 32: 28) and upon Korah and his companions (Num. 16: 32) was not more terrible. The lesson penetrated into the very centers of conscious life that, though God was on their side against their enemies, and though He was leading them into a splendid inheritance, He would scourge them with whips of scorpions if they proved unfaithful to His demand for purity of life.

A similar lesson was taught in the direction to destroy the Midianites utterly. This command, and the similar injunction respecting the Canaanites, are constantly cited to discredit the morality of the Scriptures, but they should be interpreted in the light of a similar judgment upon Israel herself (Num. 25: 5), and in the light of the similar reason for both judgments (Num. 25: 3, 16-18). The destruction of these tribes was not simply that the ground might be cleared for its occupation by the Israelites. Modern investigations amply corroborate the statements of the Scriptures that Canaan had become a moral plague spot of the world. Wherever the influence of the Canaanites penetrated it was a moral miasma. We do not know how much of the higher civilization of the world was conserved and promoted by these awful judicial acts of stamping out a pest that was contaminating the race. Strangely enough, these frightful wars did not make Israel cruel. The reason was that the Hebrews saw in these terrible commands the witness of Jehovah against the sins of the land.

And the great truth that co-ordinates these events

finds complete illustration and enforcement in the death of Moses before he entered the land of promise. Is there a more moving incident in the whole



**Mount Nebo.**

range of human history than the story of that great disappointment? He had lived and walked with God; he had consecrated the most splendid gifts to the service of God; he had undergone labors and cares that tax the imagination; he loved the people; he loved the good, great cause, but, in a moment of exasperation, he had lost sight of the fact that the power through which he had wrought was not his own (Num. 20: 10), and for that he was not suffered to see the consummation of his labors and of his hopes. It was not for him to lead the triumphant hosts of Israel into the land of promise (Num. 20: 12). The supreme earthly reward of all those toils was withheld because of that self-sufficient moment in which he forgot his relationship to the Most High. Could there possibly be a more impressive illustration of the demand of Jehovah for conformity to the highest ideals involved in His own character and in His relationship to men?

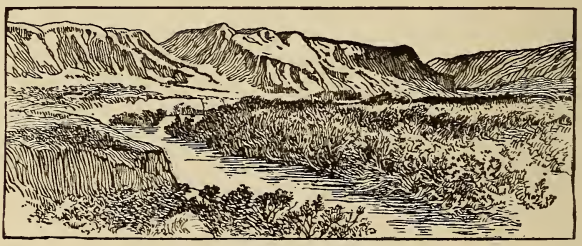
God's demand for righteousness—the righteousness without a stain or fleck, the righteousness that answers to His own character—was enforced by the career of Balaam, by the judgment upon Israel for her idolatry, by the terrible destruction of the Midianites, but most of all, perhaps, in the disappointment of Moses.

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE TRIUMPHS OF FAITH.

Josh. chs. 1-6.

Dean Stanley lacked his usual felicity in characterization when he said that the story of the conquest of Canaan is "the most secular part of Old Testament history." The implication that the narrative leaves God out of account, and moves wholly in the realm of the material is certainly not borne out by the facts. Indeed, there are few passages in the Scriptures that illustrate more graphically the nature and the rewards of faith.



The Jordan River and Valley.

Perhaps no attempt to define faith has been wholly successful, for faith is like vision, it must be experienced to be apprehended. It would be impossible to describe sight to one born blind. Still, in a general way, we may say that faith is the human response to God and loyalty to the convictions that response generates.

Such faith, this history shows us, is the basis of courage. Over and over again God enjoins upon Joshua to "be strong and of good courage." He appeals to His servant to summon all his resources of manliness to resist the temptation of faint-heartedness. But you can no more make a man courageous by a

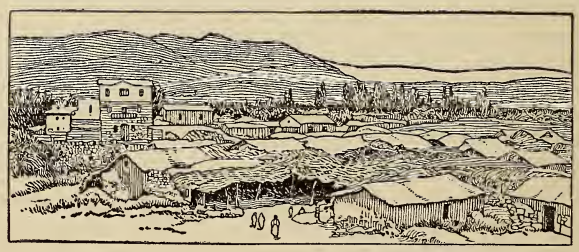
command than you can make him happy by telling him to be so. When, however, you put before him facts that elicit bravery or rejoicing, if his inner life responds to them, he becomes inevitably courageous or happy. Jehovah did not expect that Joshua would be made courageous by a precept, and so He attaches to each command the consideration to which the life of His servant can respond. Joshua is assured that the land will be given to Israel; that God will not fail or forsake him, and that He is working out a great purpose. Joshua's courage, therefore, was in proportion to his own response to the revelation of God.

When we are told that we are not to rely upon our own strength but to trust in God, the meaning is not that human capacity and power are worthless, or that we are not to do our best, the meaning is that we are to keep ourselves in such relation with the revelation of God that it makes its normal impression on our souls, and invigorates every human power for the appointed work.

And the spirit which is illustrated in Joshua characterized, in a good degree, the temper of the whole nation. There were many differences in coherence and discipline between the hosts of the exodus and the tribes that crossed the Jordan. Still, thirty-eight years before the Israelities were not so deficient in these qualities that they were totally unfit for the land of promise. They might have entered upon their heritage then, had it not been for their dull and partial response to God. Now all that has changed. They believe in Jehovah; they trust Him; they go forward across the river into that terrible land with stout hearts because they realize His presence. The dangers are just as great as those that led their fathers to turn back, but the children have a very different relationship to Jehovah. The experiences of the wilderness and the victories over the Amorites and the Midianites have changed their whole attitude toward the great enterprise. They are ready to enter upon the heritage.

The episode of Rahab illustrates the same truth in relation to the whole of character. Her deceit and treachery are not to be defended or palliated. They are in the same class as the tricks and frauds of Jacob. But, as in the case of Jacob, amid all this dross there was a noble quality in this woman's soul. Somehow she had come to believe that Jehovah was the true God, and that His purpose would triumph, and she was loyal to that response of her soul to the truth she had learned about Jehovah. That faith redeemed her ignorance and wickedness. Ultimately it must have transformed her soul, and her name has its place in the glorious muster roll of the heroes and heroines of faith (Heb. 11 : 31).

It was this attitude of faith that God rewarded in the miracles of the Jordan and at Jericho. Want of faith had compelled the fathers of these men to pass their lives in the wilderness. Now, in response to the faith of the children, God made a highway through the turbulent Jordan and smote the walls of Jericho with His own hand.



*From "Glimpses of Bible Lands."*

**Modern Jericho.**

We miss the finest point of this narrative if we think that because God opened the way for Israel by a miracle, and the days of miracle have passed, the history has no teaching for us. In a miracle God acts according to the same principles and for the same purposes that govern His action in His providence. In

the miracle we see the end, which is usually reached by a slow process, achieved at a stroke. Just as a tiny mirror held in the hand may reflect the distant landscape and the glories of the heavens, the miracle reflects in a single moment of time the principles and purposes that control the divine action in the vast realms of nature and human history. The miracle is the providence of ages condensed into a moment.

The teaching, then, of these great deliverances and victories of Israel is that the resources of God are pledged to the fulfilment of His promises, and His promises are not only to be found in words that can be referred to by chapter and verse, they are also to be found in the hopes and aspirations that manifest the response of human hearts to His revelation.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE WINNING OF CANAAN.

**Josh. chs. 7-11 ; Jud. 1 : 1—3 : 6.**

Jehovah promised that He would give Israel the land of Canaan, but He did not give it to them in the sense that it was theirs without an effort on their part. Though it was a gift, it was also to be won; though it was a heritage, it was to be conquered. That is true of all the best gifts of God. They are not bestowed upon men, as one would give a lad a coin, and all he had to do was to open his hand to receive it. They are given as one might give a boy an education. A father may give his son the opportunity of leisure, of books, and of instruction, but all these will be in vain unless the boy matches the opportunity by his studious effort. That explains the apparently inconsistent language of the Scriptures in regard to salvation itself. Sometimes it is represented as a gift to be taken; sometimes as a prize to be won. It is both, a gift to be taken by the efforts that match the gift. And the Christian may say with St. Paul, "Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift" (2 Cor. 9: 15), while at the same time he says, "I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3: 14). Canaan was a gift to Israel, but Canaan had to be conquered. Jehovah pledged Himself to the help of Israel, and promised that the people should not fail in their great undertaking, but that pledge and that promise did not take away from the Israelites the necessity of obedience, of courage, and of the steadfast endurance of hardship.

The outstanding teaching of the whole narrative is that those who would receive the blessings of God must do the will of God. It has been justly said that the speech of Joshua to the two and a half tribes, en-

joining them to love Jehovah, to walk in all His ways, to keep His commandments and to cleave to Him and to serve Him with all the heart and soul (Josh. 22: 5), is the key to the whole book of Joshua.

This truth receives dramatic enforcement in the evil that the greed and deceit of Achan brought upon the Israelites before Ai, and in the stoning of Achan (Josh. 7: 5, 16-26). The teaching of that incident is not that one evil-doer in a nation, a church, or in a company of good men will necessarily bring down the divine wrath upon the whole group to which he belongs. A wicked man has no such dreadful power as that over the welfare of the good men with whom he may be associated. It is not within the power of a thief and traitor, like Judas in the band of the apostles, to bring to naught their work. The incident of Achan must be judged by itself. The command of the Lord had been broken secretly. Jehovah chose to bring the evil to light by a startling and an unaccountable defeat, that at once provoked inquiry as to whether there had been disobedience in the camp. And yet, while we know that the evil visited upon Israel was principally an intense object lesson as to the results of disobedience, and did not disclose a universal principle of the divine government, the incident brought home to Israel, as it does to us, the far-reaching evil that may be wrought by the sin of an individual, even though the sinful act is largely concealed. There is a moral as well as a physical miasma. Israel learned at Ai that if Canaan was to be won it must be through obedience to God rather than by force of arms. It became an impossible task to persuade the most enlightened men in Israel that God was on the side of the heaviest battalions. It was burned into the consciousness of the nation by such experiences as that at Ai, that the weight of battalions afforded no test whatever of the sympathies of Jehovah. He could save by many or by few (1 Sam. 14: 6).

The same truth, that, though Canaan is a gift, it

must be won by obedience, is illustrated in the partial possession of the land because of partial obedience (Jud. 2:2, 3). The command to make no league with the inhabitants and to hew down their altars was largely disregarded. The conquest, not through sympathy, but through greed and fear, was not pushed and made thorough. The Canaanites remained through many centuries to plague the Israelites and corrupt the most temptable. It is said, indeed, that the presence of the Canaanites afforded Israel an opportunity to demonstrate their loyalty to Jehovah (Jud. 2: 21, 22) and to discipline them in war (Jud. 3: 1, 2). There are few evils that do not involve incidental benefits. A great conflagration elicits the heroism of the firemen. A San Francisco earthquake demonstrates the sympathies of the world. But such catastrophies were not necessary to manifest these virtues. The gain is as nothing in comparison with the loss. On the low level of a partial possession of its heritage Israel might survive, but Israel's partial obedience shut the nation for centuries out of the full heritage, just as the lack of faith at Kadesh-barnea had shut an earlier generation for forty years out of its proper work and triumph.

The truth that underlies and gleams through these narratives, like the precious metal in the rocky strata, is one of perpetual significance. The choicest gifts of God are not thrust upon men. He promises great blessings and a great heritage, but men must respond to them, in order to receive them, as a lad must respond by mental application to the opportunity to gain an education. And the response of man to God's gift is the obedience to God that springs from faith in Him.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE HAND OF GOD IN HISTORY.

Jud. 3 : 7—12 : 7.

Just as we may study the essential principles of physiology to the best advantage by examining the simplest organisms, so we may see the methods of the divine government clearly revealed in the primitive conditions set forth in such a narrative as this. What, then, does this record indicate as to God's way of dealing with men?

First of all, it shows the existence of a real, though often imperceptible, link between sin and its penalty. The first two verses of the passage we are examining are typical of the teaching of the book of Judges: "And the children of Israel did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, and forgat Jehovah their God, and served the Baalim and the Asheroth. Therefore the anger of Jehovah was kindled against Israel, and he sold them into the hand of Cushan-rishathaim, king of Mesopotamia; and the children of Israel served Cushan-rishathaim eight years" (Jud. 3: 7, 8). This disobedience is repeated, and the bondage to Moab follows (Jud. 3: 12, 13). This disobedience is repeated a second time, and the bondage to Canaan follows (Jud. 4: 1, 2). It is repeated a third time, and the bondage to the Midianites follows (Jud. 6: 1, 2). It is repeated a fourth time, and the bondage to the Philistines and the Ammonites follows (Jud. 10: 6-9). As surely as Israel followed strange gods, she became a prey to the peoples whose gods she worshiped.

Many of the penalties of sin come through natural causation. The results of intemperance, for example, are well known. But some of the penalties of sin may be quite different from the inevitable results of the evil act. In the case of Israel, what was the link that bound idolatry and captivity so inexorably together?

Why did bowing the knee to Baal make the Israelites lose their courage and skill in war so that they became an easy prey to their enemies? That is a question that we can only answer by seeing that in the providential government of the world God visits upon sin penalties quite apart from the inevitable result of the evil deeds. When Abimelech fell by the millstone, cast by the hand of a woman, the writer of the book of Judges saw a relationship between that and Abimelech's crime of three years before. The relationship is not in the realm of natural causation, but in the realm of providence. "Thus God requited the wickedness of Abimelech . . . in slaying his seventy brethren" (Jud. 9: 56).

The sons of Jacob could not trace the connection between their own cruelty to Joseph and the evil case in which they found themselves in Egypt, but they did not doubt that there was such a connection. "And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the distress of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us" (Gen. 42: 21). Our Lord cautions us against regarding all the evils that befall men as the providential sequences of peculiar sins (Lu. 13: 2; Jo. 9:3), but His great teaching of the universal providence of God gives explicit warrant to the representation that the link between the idolatries of Israel and the successive captivities —and the link between many sins and their penalties— is to be found in the providential government of the world.

Again, these records reveal unmistakably the long-suffering and the mercy of God. In the description of each one of this series of disobediences and captivities it is said or implied that, though "the anger of Jehovah was kindled against Israel" (Jud. 3:8), when the people cried unto Him, He heard them and sent them deliverance. Several of the psalms show the impression that these events made upon a later

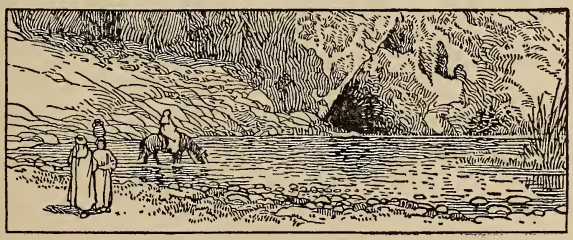
generation. In the one hundred and sixth psalm we find this noble generalization of all the history covered by this period:

> "Many times did he deliver them;
> But they were rebellious in their counsel,
> And were brought low in their iniquity.
> Nevertheless he regarded their distress,
> When he heard their cry:
> And he remembered for them his covenant,
> And repented according to the multitude of
> his lovingkindnesses."

Israel's confidence in the mercy of Jehovah was not an inference from an abstract definition of God; it sprang from a knowledge of her own history. The glorious outburst, which still thrills our souls, was the outcome of a vital experience:

> "He made known his ways unto Moses,
> His doings unto the children of Israel.
> Jehovah is merciful and gracious,
> Slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness,
> . . . . . .
> He hath not dealt with us after our sins,
> Nor rewarded us after our iniquities." Ps. 103:7, 8, 10.

And we cannot miss seeing in these records that Jehovah works out the deliverances of Israel through a chosen individual. Othniel saves Israel from the captivity of Mesopotamia (Jud. 3: 9); Ehud from



Gideon's Fountain.

that of Moab (Jud. 3: 15); Deborah and Barak from that of Canaan (Jud. chs. 4, 5); Gideon from that of Midian (Jud. chs. 6-8), and Jephthah

from that of Ammon (Jud. ch. 11). As the writer says: "When the children of Israel cried unto Jehovah, Jehovah raised up a saviour to the children of Israel" (Jud. 3: 9). The supreme gift of God to men is a great personality. The forces resident in one human soul may change the entire outlook of a nation, and contradict the shrewdest forecasts.

The providential character of these deliverers is not weakened by the account of some of their deeds of which we cannot approve. We are not called upon to apologize for or to defend the duplicity of Ehud; the treachery of Jael; the cruelties of Gideon, or the misguided fidelity of Jephthah. They lived in times of relative moral darkness. We do well if we are as true to the light we have as they were to the light they had. With superb insight the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews selects the only quality in men that is open to universal imitation—faith (Heb. 13: 7). The deed may be condemned in the light of higher ideals, while the faith that prompted the deed remains eternally worthy.

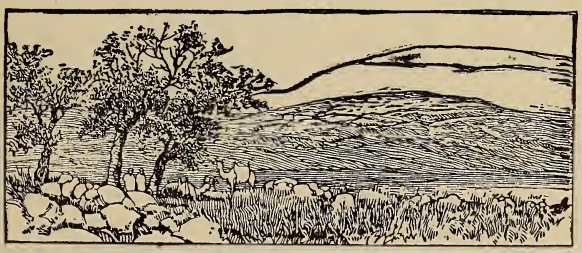
Through all this record there runs a line of light—God is in history. The sequences of sin are not merely natural, they are providential—the will of a personal God forges many a link we cannot see. At the same time deliverance from these sequences is wholly in the hand of God, who is "plenteous in mercy"; and the deliverance is wrought by the means most entirely beyond human forecast, the coming into the world of a human personality endowed for the specific task.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### OVERTHROW AND REDEMPTION.

**1 Sam. 1 : 1—7 : 2.**

Various forces led to the period of weakness and degradation that coincides with the judgeship of Eli. The central cause of this degeneration, however, was not physical but moral. It was Israel's failure in loyalty to Jehovah. From this root sprang the toleration of the Canaanites, whose presence in the land was a perpetual source of corruption; from this root sprang the iniquities of Benjamin that led to such fierce vengeance by the rest of Israel that the tribe was well nigh exterminated (Jud. chs. 19-21); from this root sprang the jealousies between Gad and Ephraim that so weakened the latter that effective resistance to the Philistines on the west of the Jordan ceased, and the



*From a photograph.*

**Hill and Ruins at Shiloh.**

national sanctuary at Shiloh lost its prestige and authority. The climax of this deterioration was reached in the conduct of the sons of Eli. This conduct was an example in high places of the original disloyalty of the people to Jehovah, and, like previous infidelities to Him, it registered itself in material overthrow (1 Sam. 4: 1-18). The most important sequences of moral defect are not physical and material, striking and

terrible as these often are, but they are moral and spiritual, and these in turn propagate physical and material results, until the whole vicious series of moral and physical causes and effects terminates in total ruin (Jas. 1: 15).

This narrative puts into sharp contrast the potent agencies of national deterioration and of national redemption. The agency of national deterioration was weak and evil men in high places. Up to this time Israel had been spared this last calamity. Her rulers had not been perfect, but, for the most part, they had been men of force and of character. There is not much to choose between a weak man and a bad man in a place of authority and influence, for the weak man is pretty certain to open the way for the wicked man. Eli was not an evil man, but he was feeble. He did not do evil or approve of it, but "his sons did bring a curse upon themselves, and he restrained them not" (1 Sam. 3: 13), since parental indulgence was stronger with him than the honor of Jehovah (1 Sam. 2: 29).

It is hardly possible to exaggerate this calamity. An Achan in the camp may work much mischief, but usually the power of the private individual to do harm is small compared with that of rulers and of recognized moral leaders. In the case of the authorized leader the whole weight of his official and representative character attaches to his conduct, and with many persons whatever he does carries with it an enormous presumption in its favor. To criticise or antagonize this looks in their eyes like disloyalty to constituted authority. Discriminating students of French history declare that one of the most grievous episodes in the life of that noble and gifted people was the rule of Catherine de Medici and of her sons. The effects of that carnival of vice have not been eradicated in three and a half centuries. Israel could be visited with no worse plague than that of the weak Eli and his wicked sons.

And the converse is true. A better gift to a nation than the wealth of harvests or of mines is that of rul-

ers who are "able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating unjust gain" (Ex. 18: 21). No wonder that among the last words of David, who had an almost unrivaled experience of life, was his praise of the good prince:

> "One that ruleth over men righteously,
> That ruleth in the fear of God,
> He shall be as the light of the morning, when
> the sun riseth,
> A morning without clouds,
> When the tender grass springeth out of the
> earth,
> Through clear shining after rain."
> 2 Sam. 23 : 3, 4.

This narrative also discloses the agency of redemption—the gift to the people of a pure, gifted, devoted personality. In the midst of all the corruption and overthrow of the later years of Eli there is some good in Israel from which the force for a better life is to spring. It is a mistake to pass universal condemnation upon even the worst period of history. In no age has God been without true witnesses. Good has never been wholly stamped out. In the days of Elijah there were still seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal (1 Ki. 19: 18). In the midst of the seething corruption of Athenian life Sophocles drew the picture of that unsurpassed woman, Antigone. In the heart of the vices of imperial Rome there was the household of Pliny. Among all the excesses of the Valois rule we recall Coligni's last letter to his wife, and many a lovely Huguenot home. So in the midst of all the degradation and riot of the period of Eli we have Elkanah and Hannah and the charming idyl of the child Samuel. To use Isaiah's figure, it was from this holy "remnant" of Israel that there sprang the redemptive force of the life of Samuel. As we see so often in this history, the best gift of God to Israel is the gift of a man. When Samuel appears the real life of Israel responds to his voice. There is that in him which touches something deeper in the soul of the nation than its disloyalties, and the better

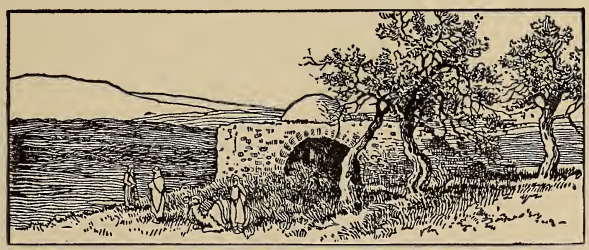
nature of Israel again asserts itself and becomes ascendant. It is no wonder that the prophets saw in these partial redemptions of Israel through God's gift of a man the promise of the Messiah.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE NEW EPOCH FOR ISRAEL.

1 Sam. 7 : 3—10 : 16.

The character of Samuel emerges from the dark and troublous times of the judges as the one hopeful indication in the life of the nation. His career marks a new epoch with such distinctness that later writers associated his work even with that of Moses. Jeremiah represents Jehovah as putting Samuel in the same rank as Moses: "Then said Jehovah unto me, Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind would not be toward this people" (Jer. 15 : 1). We are now to look at the principal features that marked the inception of the new era.



Ramah, the Home of Samuel.

First there was the fresh and vital appeal of Samuel to the moral consciousness of Israel. Things were in a desperate way. The dominance of the Philistines in Canaan was almost complete. Doubtless the so-called "practical" man could have suggested much more sensible expedients for rallying the people to hold their own against the Philistines than preaching and prayer and a renewal of allegiance to Jehovah. He would have said that what Israel needed was a compromise of differences between the tribes, better shields and spears and bows and a more rigorous mil-

itary drill. But Samuel, with his profound insight into the facts of human nature and the order of the divine government, saw that the main cause of the decline in national vigor and success was moral, and that any real change must come from a quickened zeal for righteousness. He saw that the great need was for the tribes to rise above their sectional quarrels through a new devotion to Jehovah (1 Sam. 7:6), and to go forth against their enemies with a new confidence in Him (1 Sam. 7:10). A watchword of our time is "the man behind the gun." Samuel did not use that phrase, but he emphasized that idea. He saw that the root difficulty with the nation was not physical or material but moral and spiritual.

Samuel took a second important step in re-establishing the national vigor by founding the monarchy. The records give us two apparently conflicting representations as to the part of Samuel in this matter. On the one hand the impression is given that Samuel saw that the nation needed a visible central authority to save it from extinction, and that he was divinely instructed to adopt measures for the establishment of a monarchy (1 Sam. 9:16; comp. Deut. 17:14-20). On the other hand he is represented as holding that the demand for a king originated with the people, that this demand was an indication of national distrust of Jehovah (1 Sam. 8:4-10), and that Jehovah's instruction to him constituted a concession to Israel's spiritual incapacity.

But perhaps these representations are not so irreconcilable as at first they appear to be. May it not be that the ideal government for Israel was the direct rule of Jehovah? Without a human king they had been delivered from Egypt and had established themselves in Canaan. While they had remained faithful to Jehovah they had been uniformly successful. Their failures were the result of their disloyalty. But now, for a long series of years, they had proved

that they were not equal to maintaining their national unity or vigor through fidelity to the unseen Jehovah. The direct rule of Jehovah was the ideal government for Israel, and it provided the conditions in which the nation would come to the noblest development, but, since the people lacked the spiritual insight and moral vigor to be loyal to an unseen King, the next best government was a human monarchy. And while Samuel deplored the failure of the nation to rise to its privilege, and saw the inevitable mischiefs of a monarchy (1 Sam. 8: 10-19), he showed his magnanimity and political foresight in inaugurating the best practicable policy. He became a principal factor in establishing the new regime (ch. 9). There was nothing sour, disagreeable or unduly critical in his attitude toward it. He was the frank and cordial friend of the new king, and did everything he could to make his administration a success.

From this point of view the narrative involves a weighty suggestion. For nations and for individuals there is always a best course. Following that, they will realize their noblest possibilities, making the most of themselves and of their opportunities, but it is very easy, especially by moral disloyalties, to fall from that high level. And, after that, what is best is not what is ideally but what is practically best, that is, best in consideration of all the circumstances in which they find themselves involved.

The tragedy of Israel was that she lost the capacity and opportunity of realizing her noblest possibilities, and that is the tragedy of most human lives, perhaps of our own. Once certain attainments and opportunities were open to us. We were disloyal or indifferent to them, and there came a time when the door was shut; and we had to make the best of what remained, and do the best we could in the circumstances; but the very highest possibilities on the lower level did not match these which were originally ours, and from which our disloyalties shut us out. It is the old story

of Eden over again. Man may make the wilderness blossom like a garden, but the wilderness is not the garden in which he was originally placed. The privileges, the opportunities, the possibilities are not only different but lower. The rule of Saul and David and Solomon and the divided kingdom are the best things possible in the circumstances, but the circumstances might have been entirely different if Israel had been loyal to Jehovah.

In this narrative, as in a mirror, we may see reflected some of the deepest spiritual experiences of our own lives.

## CHAPTER XX.

### A SUCCESS THAT FAILS.

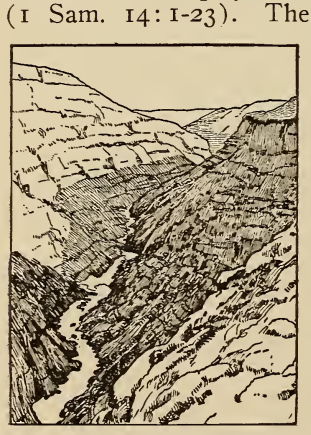
1 Sam. 10 : 17—14 : 52.

Emerson has somewhere said that there is no cause so desperate but that the coming of the right man will make it a success. The truth of this is largely illustrated by the career of Saul, the first king of Israel. The narrative gives us a dark picture of the extent and thoroughness of the Philistine oppression (1 Sam. 13 : 17-23) at the period when Saul was chosen king. To Saul the kingship did not mean the enjoyment of the titles and privileges of royalty; it meant an opportunity for serving the people by leading them to national independence. If, in the common phrase of our day, Saul did not "make good" the nation would speedily find means of ridding itself of him and of his house.

We should not suffer our recollection of the tragedy of Saul's last years to obscure our appreciation of what he did for Israel. The results of many hard-fought campaigns are summarized in a few brief sentences of military directness. There is nothing in Cæsar's *"Commentaries"* that surpasses the terse incisiveness of the account of what Saul did: "Now, when Saul had taken the kingdom over Israel, he fought against all his enemies on every side, against Moab, and against all the children of Ammon, and against Edom, and against the kings of Zobah, and against the Philistines: and whithersoever he turned himself, he put them to the worse. And he did valiantly, and smote the Amalekites, and delivered Israel out of the hands of them that despoiled them" (1 Sam. 14 : 47,48). It seems as if these victories of Saul prepared the way for David's work. The final defeat of Saul at Mount Gilboa, of course, undid much of what he had accomplished, but not everything. The

nation had come to a good measure of self-respect and self-consciousness under the administration of Saul, and David addressed himself to a very different task than the one that had fallen to his predecessor.

The factors in Saul's success are readily discerned. His physical endowments were of a high order. He had manly stature, strength and beauty; and these are not insignificant qualities in the leadership of men. His mental traits were equally impressive. He was brave, modest, sagacious, enterprising and patriotic. At the very outset of his career he showed insight and skill in eliciting and wielding the unutilized forces of Israel (1 Sam. 11:7, 8). His deliverance of the people of Jabesh-gilead was a stroke of genius that won him the confidence of the whole nation (1 Sam. 11:9-11). This was followed by that bold stroke against the Philistines, in which Jonathan, the son of Saul, played such a daring and heroic part (1 Sam. 14:1-23). The result was that Jonathan was greatly endeared to the whole nation, and indirectly the house of Saul was strengthened. The series of victories over the other enemies of Israel seemed to justify most completely the establishment of the monarchy and the choice of Saul as king.



*From a photograph.*
The Ravine at Michmash.

What, now, was the defect in his character? What was "the rift within the lute"? It is a difficult but fascinating question. Still, thus early in his career, there is some trustworthy and satisfactory material for a partial answer. Reading between the lines

of the fourteenth chapter, which describes the battle of Michmash, we cannot miss seeing that the narrator subtly outlines two unhappy traits of Saul's character.

The vow of Saul, which wrought such disaster to Israel (1 Sam. 14: 24, 29), was peculiarly the act of a resolute and daring man, whose impulsiveness prevented him from thinking through a course of action, and making a calm estimate of its probable consequences.

Saul's persistence in adhering to his rash vow,against all the dictates of humanity and paternal love, is thoroughly consistent with this type of character. A man of these qualities may be brilliant and effective, but he is also dangerous. His persistence and steadiness manifest themselves at the wrong places, and he is peculiarly liable to substitute confidence in his own purpose for the dictates of reason and the direction of God.

The implied contrast between Saul and Jonathan in this same campaign emphasizes this trait of the king. Jonathan relies upon divine guidance, and has the splendid confidence that "there is no restraint to Jehovah to save by many or by few" (1 Sam. 14: 6). Saul, indeed, consults Jehovah, but after the event, when he is in perplexity (1 Sam. 14: 37, 41). There seems to be no disposition on his part to put his whole plan, at the beginning, before it has been adopted, into the hands of Jehovah to be guided by Him. Saul represents the type of man who "leans to his own understanding," but with whom the impulse of the moment takes the place of an intelligent and persistent sense of duty.

However we may interpret the later declaration that "the Spirit of Jehovah departed from Saul" (1 Sam. 16: 14; 18: 12), it seems to indicate that Saul represents the type of man who is strong in purely human qualities, but whose life is not thoroughly responsive to divine influences. "The way of man is

not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. 10: 23). In the subsequent history we shall see the tragical consequences of this failure to respond to the manifest indications of the will and purpose of God.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### SAUL AND DAVID.

1 Sam. chs. 15-31; 2 Sam. ch. 1.

The inward defect of Saul's character was brought before us in our last study. It consists in a certain self-will and disregard of his dependence upon Jehovah, until he was brought into a strait when his religion manifested itself in superstitution rather than in trust and obedience (1 Sam. 14:38; 18:15, 29; 28:7).

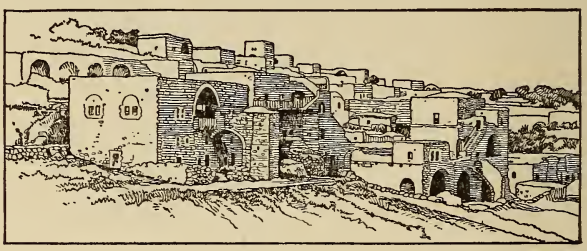
Defects of character always find circumstances to match and emphasize them. Arrows have a strange way of piercing the joints in the harness. Achilles was wounded in his heel. The circumstances of Saul's life elicited and brought into the foreground his peculiar weaknesses. The task to which he had been called was of baffling perplexity. Something more than human wisdom was needed for its successful accomplishment. Saul does not seem to have recognized this. The situation demanded self-restraint, tact and audacity. These were not the qualities in which he was particularly strong, and when he did display any of them, it was at the wrong time.

Goethe suggests that in Hamlet Shakespeare represents the unbalancing of a noble mind because it was charged with a mission for which its specific powers were inadequate. In the career of king Saul we see precisely the same thing. Saul is not equal to the place in which he finds himself. He is conscious of the misadjustment between his capacities and his task. Self-distrust, and the disappointment of his own heart, of his friends and the nation corrode his inner life. Jealousy of a rising man is inevitable. Reflection breeds irresolution. The fine balance of reason is disturbed.

Men are not to be timid when they are confronted

by great tasks and responsible positions, but there is no folly like that of seeking to do our duties, whether they are small or great, without a humble reliance upon divine direction and help. Though Saul was not so richly endowed as David, he might have filled the kingship satisfactorily if his attitude toward divine aid had been different.

It is hardly possible to concieve of a more striking contrast between two careers than is presented in that



*From a photograph.*

Bethlehem, David's Birthplace.

of Saul and that of David. At first David does not fill the eye so completely as does Saul. He has not so much of the physical king about him. But he has all the strong and winning traits of a man who makes his way and is the master of the situation wherever he finds himself. He can speak to the heart of a woman (1 Sam. 18: 28; 19: 12), and he had that indefinable quality of command and leadership by which he could assert his authority over a band of rough and desperate men (1 Sam. 22: 1, 2). He could soothe the disturbed mind of the king by his music (1 Sam. 16: 23), and at the same time win the highest praise for his valor (1 Sam. 18: 7). He could be hated by the father and yet retain the devoted love of the pure and chivalrous son. He could be ambitious, and at the same time absolutely loyal to the king. The picture the narrative summons before us is that of a marvelously strong and flexible nature. David has the pe-

culiar note of greatness that he can always act with his whole nature under the dominance of the specific quality which the occasion requires. He can throw his whole force and weight in a certain direction, and yet always be himself.

And, even thus early in his career, there is an elevation and nobility of mood about him that are unmistakable. His magnanimity, when he had the king completely in his power, made a deep impression even upon

*From a photograph.*

The Wilderness of Judea,
Where David hid from Saul.

the troubled and clouded mind of Saul (1 Sam. 26: 21). His treatment of the men of Jabesh-gilead was an instance of extraordinarily fine feeling (2 Sam. 2: 5, 7). His lament for Saul and Jonathan rises far above the atmosphere of suspicion and intrigue and hate, into the clear air of noble and sympathetic appreciation; while the elegy for Jonathan discloses a nature which is susceptible of the warmest personal attachment.

There are great qualities in any man. David was one of those rare spirits equal to any emergency of human life. Whatever the crisis you might be certain that he would acquit himself strongly and nobly. But the one quality that binds all these traits into unity and efficiency is the subtle but powerful uplift of his soul toward God. We feel it so as we read between the lines of the narrative; we become most keenly aware

of it when we interpret these early years in the light of their later fruitage. Even Saul, with his smaller endowments, might have succeeded had he not lacked this strange but real spiritual quality.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### THE CAREER OF DAVID.

**2 Sam. chs. 2-12.**

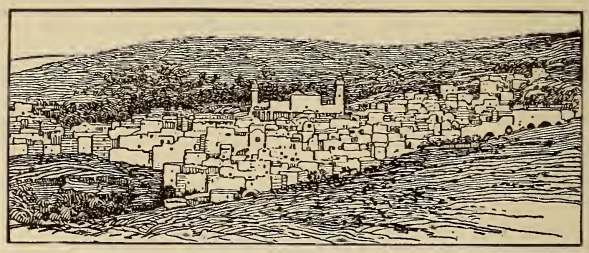
The student who reads these ten chapters continuously will rise from his task with a deep impression as to the enormous service David rendered the Hebrew people in uniting the nation in sentiment and in enlarging its borders.

After the defeat of Saul at Mount Gilboa the outlook for the Israelites was dark, but perhaps it was not so desperate as sometimes it is represented to have been. One of the causes of Saul's overthrow was the want of co-operation between himself and David. The problem before David was to heal the breach between the house of Joseph and the house of Judah.

It is an interesting investigation to trace step by step his success in doing this. David's prestige with the tribe of Judah, because of his personal prowess, his marriage with Abigail, who was exceedingly well connected, and his gifts to the elders of the tribe (1 Sam. 30: 26-31), made his coronation at Hebron an easy matter as soon as he was free to return from his exile among the Philistines. But David's heart was set on greater things than being king of Judah. A series of fortuitous events advanced his purpose, but he was alert to take advantage of every opportunity, though patient enough, as Napoleon phrased it, "not to pluck the pear before it was ripe."

The position of the northern tribes was perilous at the best, but the act of Abner in killing Asahel, the brother of Joab, though in self-defense, brought down on him the blood revenge of the stern captain of Judah (2 Sam. 3: 27). This deprived the Benjamites of their military leader. Naturally the act of Joab would have embittered still further the relations of the two states, but David averted that result by his sympathy at the

grave of Abner, and his fasting in grief for the fallen prince (2 Sam. 3 : 31-38). The treachery of the two captains of the kingdom of Saul in putting Ish-baal (Ish-bosheth) to death, was an act that aroused the deepest indigation of David (2 Sam. 4 : 5-12), but it made the easier the union of the two states. David's coronation at Hebron was not a mere formal act, it was accompanied by a firm alliance of the tribes.



*From a photograph.*

Hebron, where David was made King.

To have brought about this national unity, not by external pressure, but through a deeper realization by all the tribes of their common kinship and destiny, was a very great achievement on the part of David. Still, David, like Saul, did not hold his kinship by any stable prescriptive right. He had to vindicate his title by the success of his administration. He did this magnificently. First of all he broke the Philistine supremacy over central Palestine (2 Sam. 5 : 17-25). Then, second, with the insight of a general and statesman, he saw the strategic importance of the fortress of Jebus, and the possibility of making it the centre of a new political and religious life. David's capture of this fortress, and the success of his policy in giving Jerusalem a distinctive character, are among the foremost achievements of human history (2 Sam. 5 : 6-9; ch. 6). And. third, David pushed the conquests of the nation so that Palestine became the actual possession of Israel. The wars against the Moabites (2 Sam. 8 : 2), against the

Ammonites (2 Sam. 10: 1-14), against the Arameans (10: 15-19; 8: 3-8), and against the Edomites (8: 13, 14), so augmented the power of David, that even Hamath became tributary. All Syria to the Euphrates owned the sway of David. Most fortunately for the success of these far reaching plans both Egypt and Assyria had been so weakened that they could not dispute the rise of this new and formidable state.

It takes but a few sentences to outline this process, but its actual working out took the keenest eye and swiftest action to discern and grasp occasions; it required the skilful utilization of intractable personalities, like that of Joab, and the power of appealing to the imagination of thousands of average men; it took years of patient waiting, to be followed by rapid and decisive strokes. Into the great result there went anxieties and perils and address and courage that make the career of David as full and as many-sided as any we can well imagine.

Singularly enough it is difficult to detect in the whole record any marked indication of self-sufficiency or self-exaltation, and the dominant note in the psalms that can be attributed to him is that of dependence upon God. Indeed, the feature of David's character that is elicited by his great sin (2 Sam. ch. 11), is that in acknowledging his sin, and in his repentance, he recognized that his life was to be ruled by a higher law than his own caprice, or passion, or even his own judgment. According to Oriental ideas such a mighty king was subject to no rule but that of his own will. But David acknowledged God's right over him, and humbled himself before God's rebuke.

Somehow David had a true and deep conception of his relationship to God. He saw that the Lord was his Shepherd (Ps. 23); that no good could come to him apart from God (Ps. 16: 1), and that the law of God was the supreme law of his life (Ps. 51: 3, 4). Versatile, skilful, and strong as David was, the secret of his success was that he was working out God's plans.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### THE HOUSE OF DAVID.

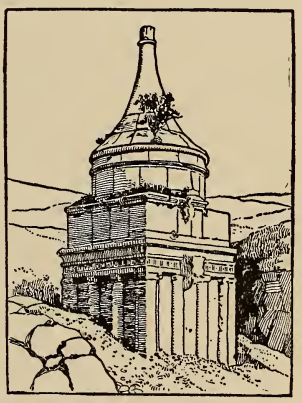
2 Sam. 13 : 1—20 : 22.

In the light of the Christian revelation we cannot say that the sufferings and troubles of men always spring out of their evil deeds (Lu. 13:4; Jo. 9:3). Such interpretations of events as the Israelites made when they attributed the three years' drought to the circumstance that Saul's wrong to the Gibeonites had not been avenged (2 Sam. 21:1-7), are not possible to-day. And yet, after we have made every allowance for the inscrutable mystery of some sufferings, it remains true that we easily see the genetic relationship between many of the sorrows and troubles of men and their sins.

"For sorrow tracketh wrong,
As echo followeth song."

The record of David's reign sets this truth in the clear light of history. The sensuality of David reappeared in his eldest son, Amnon. Strangely enough, David's anger simply expressed itself in words, but the outrage to his sister rankled in the heart of Absalom, and led him to a bitter revenge. The reinstatement of Absalom in the king's favor, before he had given any sign of repentance, shows a singular weakness on the part of David. It was as though he saw in the unfolding tragedy in his own household the reflection of his own sin, and he was nerveless to punish the evil-doers, or to arrest the evolution of wickedness. Undoubtedly this early alienation of Absalom toward his father's house played a prominent part in the birth and growth of his purpose to supplant his father. The plot of Absalom to seize the throne shook David's power to its center. The great king became an object of the ribaldry of the worthless Shimei (2 Sam. 16:7). It seemed for the moment as if the

cause of David were hopeless and is was only the fidelity of the Philistine guards (2 Sam. 15:18-22), the craft of Hushai (2 Sam. 15:32-37), and the military capacity of Joab and the veteran captains that saved the day (2 Sam. 18:1-7). Even as it was, the revolt led to the slaughter of Absalom—a result that was only less terrible to David than his own overthrow. For in some way this beautiful and wild youth had greatly endeared himself to his father. No one can read David's lament for his wayward son without hearing in it the throb of a breaking heart (2 Sam. 18:33).



**So-called Tomb of Absalom, in the Kidron Valley near Jerusalem.**

Although Absalom was not buried here (2 Sam. 18:17), the Jews to this day show their hatred of him by stoning the tomb that bears his name whenever passing by it.

The rebellion of the ten tribes, which dealt the power of David even a more staggering blow (2 Sam. 19:40—20:22), was the direct outcome of the earlier revolt, which had sown jealousies and revealed weaknesses that an ambitious man like Sheba (2 Sam. 20:1, 2) was alert to turn to his profit. Thus, with almost the inexorableness of a classic Greek tragedy, the terrible sequences of sin unfold themselves, linked by the subtile and mighty bonds of moral and providential forces.

This teaching is made still more impressive when we reflect that the undoubted excellencies of David's character did not operate to avert the development of these troubles and sufferings. We are quite apt to interpret human life in the terms of book-keeping. We think that if we strike a balance between a man's virtues and his sins, and the balance is on the right side,

he must be called a good man, entitled to the rewards of goodness. But good and evil do not neutralize each other in that easy fashion. On many sides of his character David was one of the best of men, in other aspects he was weak and low—and we may say this without forgetting that he is not to be judged by our standards. The strength of David did not avert the evil sequences of his weakness. Both the good and the evil in him produced their appropriate fruitage. We deceive ourselves when we imagine that our excellencies will counteract our defects and avert their evil results. Any evil fostered in the heart is like the germs of a disease, which develops according to its own law. No matter how good we are we cannot afford to tolerate any evil in our lives.

And yet David is characterized as "a man after Jehovah's own heart." Thomas Carlyle, in a famous passage in "*Heroes and Hero Worship,*" has given the best exposition of that saying. He says:

"On the whole, we make too much of faults; the details of the business hide the real center of it. Faults? The greatest of faults, I should say, is to be conscious of none. Readers of the Bible above all, one would think, might know better. Who is called there 'the man according to God's own heart'? David, the Hebrew king, had fallen into sins enough; blackest crimes; there was no want of sins. And thereupon the unbelievers sneer and ask, Is this your man according to God's heart? The sneer, I must say, seems to me but a shallow one. What are faults, what are the outward details of a life; if the inner secret of it, the remorse, temptations, true, often-baffled, never-ended struggle of it, be forgotten? 'It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.' Of all acts, is not, for a man, repentance the most divine? The deadliest sin, I say, were that same supercilious consciousness of no sin—that is death; the heart so conscious is divorced from sincerity, humility and fact; is dead; it is 'pure' as dead dry sand is pure. David's life and history, as written for us in those Psalms of his, I consider to be the truest emblem ever given of a man's moral progress and warfare here below. All earnest souls will ever discern in it the faithful struggle of an earnest human soul towards what is good and best."—(The Hero as Prophet.)

We may add to this the remark of an eminent minister to Charles Sumner, when the statesman raised some objection to the declaration that David was a

man after God's heart: "Mr. Sumner, the Bible does not say that David was an angel after God's heart, but a man, a man, with a man's limitations and failures and defeats. David was a man after God's heart."

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### THE INHERITANCE OF SOLOMON.

1 Ki. chs. 1-8.

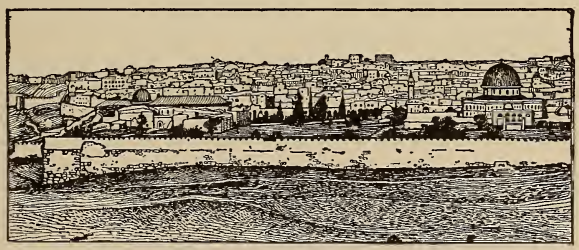
If ever a man could be said to have been "born with a silver spoon in his mouth," it was Solomon, the son of David. Everything went his way. He is typical of that class of men who by birth or circumstances come to great place, but who would have held only respectable or ordinary positions had it not been for the accidents of fortune. We often say that every man is the architect of his own fortune, but it is not true that every man who occupies a great place has won it by his capacity. David was the sort of man who would have been eminent anywhere. It is exceedingly doubtful if the world would have heard much about Solomon if it had not been for a combination of circumstances with which he had almost nothing to do.

To begin with, he gained the throne by the astuteness of an intriguing and unscrupulous woman, assisted by Nathan the prophet. The succession to the throne of Israel was not hereditary under the rule of primogeniture. If that had been the fact, the claim of Adonijah would have been incontestable. Two elements entered into the succession: the nomination of the reigning sovereign and the approval of the people. David set aside the claim of Adonijah in response to the appeal of Bath-sheba, his favorite wife, which was dexterously re-inforced by Nathan, who had privately arranged with the queen to appear before the king at an opportune moment (1 Ki. 1:11-31). And we can hardly resist the suspicion that Bath-sheba was not reluctant to proffer the request to Solomon which led him to order the death of Adonijah, his elder half-brother, thus removing a possible rival to the throne (1 Ki. 2:13-25). The whole narrative is redolent with Oriental intrigue, and Solomon, whose

part in it is almost wholly passive, becomes the beneficiary of all its profits.

Again, Solomon inherited all the prestige of his father's great work in harmonizing the conflicting interests of the tribes, and building up a stable government out of disorganized fragments. There is not the slightest indication that Solomon could have done what his father did. The hard, pioneer work was finished when Solomon succeeded to the throne. He came into a splendid heritage. There is, indeed, a certain largeness and magnificence about the commercial plans of Solomon and about his projects for the internal development and embellishment of the kingdom. But it is very much easier for one who inherits large resources to inaugurate and prosecute great schemes than it is for one who must work with scanty means on narrow margins.

Still further, even the great enterprise with which the name of Solomon is most closely associated—the building of the temple—was only in a very limited sense his work. The purpose seems to have been en-



The Temple Area from the Mount of Olives.
The mosque with the large dome stands on the site of Solomon's temple.

tirely David's, who had prepared vast resources for this very work (1 Chron. 22: 14-17). Even the architecture was not the product of Solomon's brain or direction, he simply carried out a plan that he had received from his father (1 Chron. 28: 11-19). And when we scrutinize the quality of Solomon's wisdom in

our next chapter we shall see that it is subject to some surprising discounts.

Our Lord twice refers to Solomon, and in both allusions there is an undertone of rebuke to a popular estimate (Mt. 6:29; 12:42). It is difficult to outline all that was in the mind of Jesus when He thought of the king who, in the common thought, typified the height of Israel's glory. But we may well believe that He, with his exact insight into human values, judged him by His own principle: "To whomsoever much is given of him shall much be required; and to whom they commit much, of him will they ask the more" (Lu. 12:48).

To the eye of Jesus there was no glamor about a great inherited position, or about the combinations of events which lift some men into high places. He was not deceived at all about the accidents of life. He looked at the real man, and He weighed the man as a man. Mr. Froude's graphic parable, "A Siding at a Railway Station" (*"Short Stories on Great Subjects,"* vol. iv, pp. 352-370), is an admirable exposition of the principle by which such a career as that of Solomon is to be appraised. Large inheritances, splendid advantages, noble privileges, do not constitute a title to greatness. Such a title does not come from our powers, but from the worthy use of them. Great endowments, instead of serving as an excuse for moral failure, bring their possessors under a more exacting law.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### THE FOLLY OF SOLOMON.

1 Ki. chs. 9-11.

The greatly praised "wisdom" of Solomon was far more an intellectual than a moral quality. It very nearly corresponded to what we mean by the term "insight." He was alert in apprehending the nature and elements of things and of problems, and was exceedingly shrewd in estimating men and the workings of human nature. But, if we call Solomon the wisest of men, we must also acknowledge that he was one of the most foolish; for he was guilty of blunders and misjudgments that are almost incredible in one of his reputed sagacity.

This consideration opens a difficult but fascinating series of questions. Why was it that Solomon, above all men, should have sought to enrich his kingdom by gross oppression? Why was it that he did not shun the religious and moral peril involved in his marriage alliances? Why was it that, after the evils of his policy were manifest to every eye, he persisted in a course that alienated himself and his kingdom from Jehovah, and threatened to endanger the fulfilment of Israel's mission to the world?

The narrative does not leave us wholly in the dark as to the proper answer to such questions.

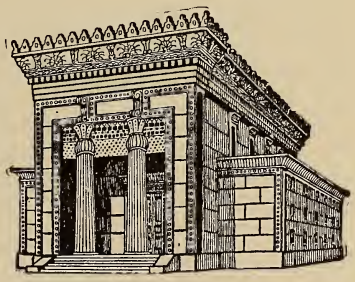
For one thing, Solomon was singularly unappreciative of distinctly moral values. Wisdom has been defined as the adaptation of means to ends. In that sort of wisdom Solomon was strong, but when it came to an estimate of the worth of the ends themselves, he was deplorably weak, almost silly. The record makes it clear what ends, in the eyes of Solomon, were exceedingly desirable. He wanted to make Israel a great and magnificent Oriental monarchy, which, on every side, would reflect his own power and glory. What did it matter to him that the common people were

crushed beneath an overwhelming burden of taxation? It mattered no more to him than a similar state of affairs did to Louis XIV of France, whom, in several points, Solomon closely resembles. The foreign marriages were contracted without a thought, probably, of the effect of introducing heathen princesses and their retainers, who would insist upon observing their native worship, with all its immoralities, into the inmost circles of the court. That aspect of the matter Solomon probably did not take into account at all. He simply asked whether or not these marriages were advisable from a diplomatic point of view; if they were, that was all he wanted to know. And when the evils of this policy became manifest, like many another statesmen he regretted—mildly—the evil, but fastened his attention on the plain advantages of his policy. The trouble was that Solomon had no keen appreciation of spiritual values, as such, when they did not contribute to secular ends. He could use them when they served his purpose, but he would not sacrifice much for purely spiritual ends—hardly anything at all. Now that is just the sort of shrewdness that is constantly over-reaching itself, by expending its energies on unworthy ends, and fighting against the most implacable and unconquerable of all enemies—the nature of things. For, however we may explain it, the nature of things is moral and spiritual. The kingdom of God is not a by-product of worldly success, but "all these things" are a by-product of seeking the kingdom of God and His righteousness (Mt. 6:33).

Still further, the tone of the whole record, as well as its explicit statements, makes it clear that it was only on ceremonial occasions or in a crisis that Solomon felt any strong inclination to seek the counsel of Jehovah. Certainly the thought of Jehovah, of His will and law and judgment, was not abidingly in his mind. In the book of Proverbs there are fourteen distinct sayings which, taken together, trace back the chief blessings of life to "the fear of Jehovah." If Solomon wrote

these proverbs he discerned the truth with his mind; it did not penetrate into his nature and vitalize it. Look at one of these sayings: "The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom" (Prov. 9: 10). The "fear of Jehovah" added to the wisdom Solomon had would have given him the true wisdom; for there is no discipline or experience which ever can do so much to give one a just appreciation of moral values as "the fear of Jehovah." The comparatively unlearned man who has that consciousness of God has the sovereign clue to sane moral judgments; he sees the issues of life in a true perspective. He may be unskilful in adapting means to ends, but he knows what the unworthy ends of life are; and "the fear of Jehovah" imparts the impulse to preserve them. Whatever the clarity of Solomon's mental insight, he seems to have lacked moral discrimination, and certainly he had the faintest moral impulse. Solomon did not appreciate moral values, and he did not have "the fear of Jehovah" before his eyes, which would have given him that appreciation.

The career of Solomon was a brief, bright day in the history of Israel. The unreflecting looked back upon it as the height of Israel's splendor, and so, in a sense, it was. But those who looked beneath the surface of events saw a splendid opportunity wasted, and they came to trace the divided kingdom and the horrors of the captivity to the folly of Solomon. His career taught the impressive lesson, on a large scale, that advantages of birth, fortune, and intellect, in a word, the most splendid human powers, must be subordinated to moral considerations and devoted to mor-



**Solomon's Temple.**
**As restored by Prof. Stade.**

al ends if they are to work out permanent good to the possessor or to those whose interests are in his hand. "The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom."

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### REVIEW OF CHAPTERS 14-25.

In the narratives we have been studying in the previous chapters, we have had brought before us, in a vivid and concrete way, the story of the development into the empire of Solomon of the tribes which, after the forty years in the wilderness, entered Canaan. It is proper that we should review this whole course of study in the light of the question, What are the factors that make for a strong, progressive, and permanent national life?

Prominent among these factors is sagacious leadership. It is interesting to notice, throughout this whole history, how largely the welfare and advance of the people depended on the insight and force of character of a few men in positions of leadership. We cannot think of the story without having such personalities as Samuel and Saul and David recur to memory. These men were by no means perfect morally, or uniformly sagacious, but their outlook was immeasurably wider than that of the people, and the net result of their administration was to the great advantage of the state. In our own history it is difficult to over-estimate the value to the nation of the group of wise and patriotic men who laid the foundations of our republic. And at the crisis of our history remarkable men have arisen who have been equal to the situation. Israel could not have become what she was under Solomon, if it had not been for Samuel and David. Our own nation could not be what she is if it had not been for Washington and Lincoln.

A second element in this development was the sinking of sectional and partisan interest in an honest devotion to the public welfare on the part of the whole people. The story of the judges presents such a hopeless picture because it looks as if it were impossible

that the mutual jealousies of the tribes would ever give place to any real national spirit. The conflicts of the tribes with each other were the secret of the Philistine triumph, rather than the Philistine resources or generalship. When the Israelites were united they were more than a match for their enemies. But Benjamin had been almost annihilated by the united tribes in a war of vengeance (Jud. chs. 19-21), and the strength of Ephraim had been broken by the Gadites under Jephthah (Jud. 12:1-6). The ill success of some of the best plans of Saul, and his defeat at Mount Gilboa, were due in large part to the antagonism that developed between him and the prophetical order, and to the alliance of David and his followers with the Philistine enemies of Israel (1 Sam. 27:5-7). The most serious difficulty that confronted David after he was anointed king at Hebron (2 Sam. 2:1-11) was the jealousy between Judah and the northern tribes. There is nothing more remarkable in the story of David than the series of fortunate events and the astute diplomacy which led all Israel to unite in choosing him as king (2 Sam. ch. 5). That act, by showing that the tribes were willing to sink their sectionalism in promoting the welfare of the whole people, established the indispensable condition for a progressive and permanent national life.

In our own country we may see the close parallel to this movement in Israel. With us as with Israel a combination of forces has led to the subordination of the sectional and the partisan to the public welfare. The process is not yet complete. There is still need for the warning of Washington's farewell address against the evils of partisanship. But we have profound reason for thanking God that during the last hundred years there has been a steady growth, throughout the whole nation, of that true patriotism which subordinates the local and self-interested to the welfare of the whole. Without this spirit it is impossible to achieve a strong or noble type of national life.

In the third place, these records of the past illustrate the controlling part of the moral factor in the life of a nation. A people may have sagacious leadership and a large degree of unity, and yet fail in building the nation, because the law of righteousness is not made supreme. The great message that rings through all these chapters is the sentence in the Proverbs (14:34):

> "Righteousness exalteth a nation;
> But sin is a reproach to any people."

The most serious enemy against which Israel had to contend was not the strength of the Philistines, or even the jealousies of her own tribes; it was the deep-seated inclination to forsake "the law of Jehovah." One would think that it would have been burned into the national consciousness that there was no good apart from His favor, the condition of which was observance of His law. Beneath all the apparent success and glory of the kingdom of Solomon we detect the elements of weakness and political disintegration, because the nation was making the moral dictates involved in the service of Jehovah subordinate to its desire for wealth and luxury and the pride of dominion. Rudyard Kipling put the great lesson from this history of Israel, and the great warning from it to our own and every other nation, in a single stanza:

> "If, drunk with sight of power, we loose
> Wild tongues that have not Thee in awe—
> Such boasting as the Gentiles use,
> Or lesser breed without the Law—
> Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,,
> Lest we forget—lest we forget."

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### THE WRATH OF MAN AND GOD'S PURPOSE.

1 Ki. 12 : 1—16 : 28.

There were several factors besides the despotic arrogance of Rehoboam (1 Ki. 12: 12-15) which led to the disruption of the kingdom of Solomon immediately after his death. Up to the time of David the separation between the northern tribes (Israel, or Ephraim) and the southern tribe (Judah) had been almost complete. The territory between the northern and southern branches of the Hebrews was occupied by Canaanitish cities, and among them was the strong fortress of Jebus. The good fortune and diplomacy of David had broken down the reluctance of the northern tribes to recognize his kingship over the whole Hebrew people; and his conquest of the Canaanitish cities in the territory between Judah and Israel, and his audacity and strategic insight in making one of them (Jerusalem) his own capital, facilitated the realization of national unity, which now became territorial as well as racial and sentimental. And yet David, in spite of these brilliant successes, never quite succeeded in allaying the jealousy between the north and the south. The most serious difficulties of the later years of his reign arose from this smouldering antagonism, which was always ready to burst into a flame (2 Sam. 19: 40-43; 2 Sam. 20: 14-22). The momentum of David's reign was strong enough to secure the acceptance on the part of the northern tribes of Solomon as king, on the ground that he had been nominated by David; and Solomon took good care to put to death every one who might contest his title with any show of success.

Strangely enough, Solomon, in spite of his high reputation for wisdom, committed an act of stupendous political folly in building up the splendors of the

capital, which was within the territory of Judah, by means of the oppressive taxation of the northern tribes. If at first the northern people rejoiced in Solomon's display of Oriental magnificence, they soon awoke to the fact that they were paying a large part of the expense, and that conditions of life were becoming less tolerable for them because of heavy taxes and forced labor.

At the death of Solomon these grievances manifested themselves decisively. The hereditary antagonism of north and south was reinforced by the preponderating influence of the south, when it gave an unfair and despotic king to the whole people. The whole situation was tremulous with difficulty. The north was certain to seize the installation of a successor to Solomon as an opportunity to assert its own rights in the national government. That is exactly what happened. The hereditary succession to the crown had not been firmly established—though in subsequent times it prevailed in Judah, it was never admitted in Israel. The northern tribes withheld their ratification of Rehoboam's accession as king until they had received satisfactory guarantees as to their own rights in the government. Accordingly their representatives met Rehoboam at Shechem—the old northern capital—with the request, actually a demand and an ultimatum: "Thy father made our yoke grievous: now therefore make thou the grievous service of thy father, and his heavy yoke which he put upon us, lighter, and we will serve thee" (1 Ki. 12:4). With an insane folly Rehoboam, following the counsel of the gilded youth who had been brought up with him in the court of Solomon, replied: "My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke: my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions" (1 Ki. 12:14). That reply—unsympathetic, insolent, despotic—marked a fatal moment. The forces that we have just reviewed threatened the disruption of the kingdom; that reply accomplished it.

The Hebrew kingdom, in an instant, split apart, never to be reunited. The clock of destiny struck. After that reply the course of human history ran in new channels.

Jeroboam, who was chosen king of Israel, had many advantages in building up a strong power. The northern tribes had been less affected by the idolatries introduced by Solomon, and the prophetic schools had flourished in the north better than in the south. If the welfare of the nation depended on its devotion to the purer worship of Jehovah the great advantage was with Israel; but with a folly that matches the folly of Rehoboam at Shechem, Jeroboam, threw away all this advantage by establishing the calf-worship at Dan and Beth-el. His purpose in this was purely political. His object was to provide a counter attraction to the worship at Jerusalem (1 Ki. 12:26-33). Even if we suppose that the calf-worship was not idolatry, but a real worship of Jehovah under the symbol of power, Jeroboam's policy was the return to an outgrown and crude conception of the Most High, and under the conditions, it practically amounted to idolatry. The records do not leave us in doubt as to the fact that this debased worship was the real cause of Israel's progressive decline and gradual extinction. The northern kingdom forsook Jehovah, and deliberately adopted a substantially heathen cult.

In Judah, at first, the outlook was hardly more hopeful. The idolatries that had been introduced by Solomon continued to flourish. Egypt improved the opportunity afforded by the division of the Hebrew nation to overrun Judah (1 Ki. 14:25, 26). It looked as if the southern kingdom were doomed to extinction. But under Asa, the second king after Rehoboam, there was a general return of the whole people to the pure worship of Jehovah (1 Ki. 15:9-25). That proved to be the saving factor in Jewish history. Asa made a prodigious blunder in entering into alliance with Syria to protect himself against the encroach-

ments of Israel from the north (1 Ki. 15:16-21), but his devotion to Jehovah kept the flame of ethical monotheistic worship burning. It had almost gone out. The darkest time for true religion since Abraham left Chaldea was the beginning of the reign of Asa.

Still, in spite of these terrific blunders that we have been considering, may we not discern in this history the unfolding of a divine purpose? One blunder counteracted another, and through all this clash of ambition and passion the cause of true religion was advancing. The ostentation and luxury and false standards of Solomon brought about the division of the kingdom, but the division of the kingdom prevented the Hebrew nation from becoming an Oriental heathen monarchy. The rivalry of Israel and the shortsighted policy of Asa opened the way to the captivity, but the captivity gave birth to the sublime vision and confidence of the prophets, out of which Christianity comes. Well might the Hebrew people say:

> "All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.
> Yet Jehovah will command his lovingkindness in the daytime;
> And in the night his song shall be with me. Ps. 42 : 7, 8.

Out of the tragedy there came a song.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

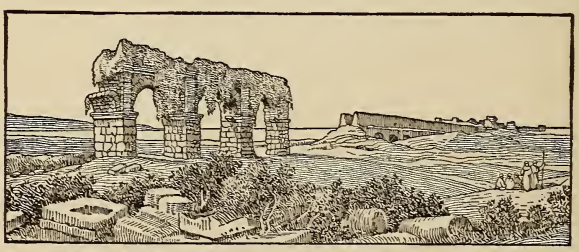
### THE FOLLY OF MORAL COMPROMISE.

1 Ki. 16 : 29—19 : 21; ch. 21.

The sentence that illuminates the situation in Israel during the reign of Ahab, and the conflict of Ahab with Elijah, is the summons of Elijah to all Israel at Carmel: "If Jehovah be God, follow him" (1 Ki. 18:21).

Ahab is an excellent example of that type of men whose primary interest is material. Often they are somewhat reluctant to subordinate moral and spiritual ends to purely temporal advantage, but they can be confidently reckoned upon to make the sacrifice when the issue is actually presented.

The policy of Ahab is entirely intelligible. He realized that, if Israel was to hold its own against Judah, and against its powerful rivals to the north and east, it must negotiate serviceable alliances, and make the best use of its commercial advantages. The throne of



Ruins on the Site of Old Tyre.

Tyre, the capital of the Phœnician world and the center of Phœnician culture, had been seized by Ethbaal, an ex-priest of Baal. Ahab achieved a brilliant stroke of policy by marrying Jezebel, the daughter of this usurping king. This alliance appears to have led to a commercial treaty (Amos 1:9) that gave a strong

impulse to the agricultural and industrial development of Israel, and popularized Phœnician ideas and customs throughout the kingdom. But Jezebel herself was the principal cause of the introduction of the religion of Phœnicia into Israel. Even Solomon had found it difficult to exclude from Jerusalem the various cults of his heathen wives. But none of his wives appears to have been of the type of Jezebel. She was an able, determined and unscrupulous woman. She deliberately set herself to assimilate the worship of Israel to that of Tyre, and she bade fair to be completely successful. The material interests of Israel dictated a close observance of the Phœnician alliance. As a foreign princess Jezebel's rights of worship and those of her retainers had probably been guaranteed by a formal treaty, and her social position, fascination, audacity and real ability were no mean powers.

It is probably incorrect to describe Ahab as adopting the religion of Jezebel, or as greatly influenced by it as a system of faith and worship. He did, indeed, build a temple and altar of Baal at Samaria to please his wife, but all along he seems to have held that she

Mount Carmel.

might worship her god, while he was true to his ancestral deity, Jehovah. In confirmation of this it has been noticed that the name of Jehovah forms a part of the names of each of Ahab's children (1 Ki. 22:40; 2 Ki. 3:1; 2 Ki. 8:26, comp. 8:18). And yet, though Ahab may have been able to persuade himself that he

was not disloyal to Jehovah, the insidious influence of the sensual Phœnician worship won its way with him (1 Ki. 16:33). His readiness to profit by the cruel outrage through which Jezebel acquired Naboth's vineyard (1 Ki. 21:1-16) indicates the ascendancy this evil woman had acquired over him.

The clue, however, to the policy of Ahab lies in his purpose to promote the material interests of his kingdom. Even his marriage was only incidental to that. It was a policy that was justifying itself by its success, and he did not find it difficult to persuade himself that he had not really forsaken Jehovah. He probably argued that he was in a difficult position, and that he should not be blamed too severely if, at the cost of tolerating the Phœnician worship in Israel, he made the nation more prosperous.

In view of these considerations the attitude and message of Elijah are unmistakable. The primary interest of Ahab was the political and commercial aggrandizement of Israel. The primary interest of Elijah was the loyalty of Israel to Jehovah in order that the knowledge and worship of the true God might be firmly established in the earth. The antagonism between the prophet and the king was the perpetual antagonism between those whose main object is the kingdom of God and His righteousness and those whose main object is all those things which the Gentiles seek (Mt. 6:32, 33). In the eyes of Ahab, Elijah, like many another in every age who has put the dictates of righteousness above those of apparent political or commercial expediency, was unpatriotic. In the eyes of Elijah, Ahab, in subordinating the moral virtues and the spiritual welfare of Israel to material advantage, was guilty of supreme disloyalty to everything that was noblest and best in the life of the nation.

Elijah's challenge, "If Jehovah be God, follow him," was the sharp summons of king and people to their spiritual allegiance. Elijah sees that the fundamental

issue is whether Jehovah is a reality or a fiction. If Jehovah is a reality, all these attempts of Ahab to secure the welfare of Israel by compromises with heathen customs and worship thwart the very end at which they aim, for if Jehovah is actually God He will not permit Ahab and Israel to succeed while rejecting allegiance to Him. If Jehovah is God, the supreme duty, reinforced not only by conscience, but by political expediency, is to follow Him. If Baal is God, the duty is equally imperative to follow him. When the fact of the existence and character of God has been settled, all policies must adjust themselves to it (Mt. 21:44). There is no possible compromise between one's conviction as to God, and the things of which God disapproves.

*From "Glimpses of Bible Lands."*

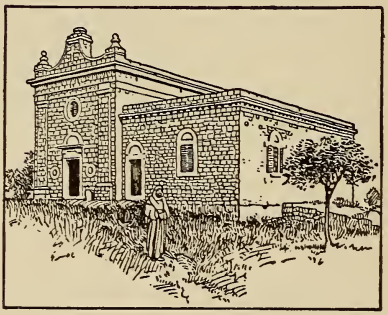
**The Elijah Monastery at the Brook Cherith.**

**In a gorge near Jericho. The monastery, built into the cliff, marks the traditional place that sheltered Elijah.**

The moral significance of the dramatic episodes of the famine (1 Ki. 18:1-6), that fulfilled Elijah's prophecy (17:1), and of the lightning flash at Carmel (18:31-39), lies in the demonstration they afforded of the reality of Jehovah's existence. When the rains and fires of the heavens confirm the claims of Jehovah's prophet there is no room for doubt as to the reality of Jehovah's existence. He is not a fiction of the imagination, but a fact.

And the man who puts himself in antagonism to Jehovah arrays against himself all the forces of creation (Ps. 148). It is hardly possible to conceive of a more cogent illustration of the suicidal folly of moral

compromises, or of a more inexorable logic than Elijah's reasoning when he said: "If Jehovah be God, follow him."



*From a photograph.*

**Chapel on Mount Carmel, the Site of Elijah's Sacrifice.**

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### THE DEVELOPMENT OF TENDENCIES.

**1 Ki. chs. 20, 22; 2 Ki. chs. 1-8.**

The Biblical historians show remarkable sagacity in seizing what to-day is called "the genetic conception of history." On the one hand, they do not pretend to give us a full account of what took place without regard to its importance; on the other hand, they do not record events simply for their dramatic interest. In their eyes an event is important just so far as it illustrates a central principle, which interprets the significance of the historic movement they are considering. They select events wholly with reference to their close relation to the causes out of which the historic process springs. It is for this reason that it is comparatively easy to discern a line of light running through each period which the Biblical writers treat, and also to apprehend a genetic bond that co-ordinates all the narratives into a higher unity. If a historian correctly apprehends the genetic principle that controls the evolution of events he will give us a work that is at once faithful to the past and interpretative of the present.

The genetic idea of the author of the book of Kings is that fidelity to Jehovah is the condition of the national welfare and independence of the Hebrew people. The unhappy division of the kingdom after the death of Solomon, which becomes the secondary cause of so many misfortunes, is traced to Solomon's disobedience to the command that he should not "go after other gods" (1 Ki. 11:9-13, 31-34). And throughout the narrative we are now considering, the constant explanation of disappointment, disaster and overthrow is that this king and that "walked in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, wherein he made Israel to sin" (1 Ki. 15:26, 34; 22:52).

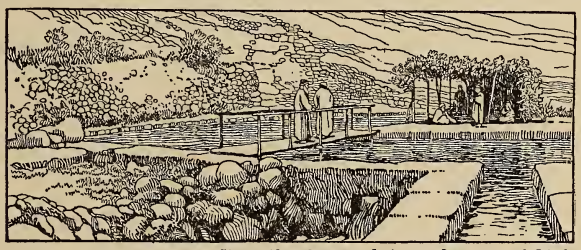
The primal cause, then, of the division and animosities and mistaken policies and defeats of the two branches of the Hebrew people is not social or economic or military, but moral and spiritual.

We can see that three great mistakes were made by the Hebrews during this period. The first was the course of Asa in seeking the aid of Ben-hadad, king of Syria (Damascus) against Baasha, king of Israel (1 Ki. 15:18-20). This was a natural sequence of the antagonism between the two branches of the Hebrews, and illustrates how evil breeds evil. That alliance introduced an important and troublesome factor into the whole situation. It accentuated the animosity between the two kingdoms; it resulted in the loss of several important Hebrew cities, and though Ahab of Israel joined with Jehoshaphat of Judah to recover Ramoth-gilead they were unsuccessful (1 Ki. 22:3-36) and no better fortune attended the attempt of Ahaziah of Judah and Joram of Israel to take the city (2 Ki. 8:28). But the worst result, perhaps, of this policy was that it involved the two kingdoms in all the political intrigues of the world empires, and made them little more than pawns on the chess-board of Semitic politics.

And the blunder of Asa was matched by a similar blunder on the part of Ahab with reference to the same foreign power. Ben-hadad II had twice attempted unsuccessfully to invade Israel (1 Ki. ch. 20). It seems that on his second defeat Ahab had him completely in his power. But, instead of demanding the conquered cities as the price of peace, Ahab appears to have accepted the simple pledge of Ben-hadad that they should be returned. It has been suggested that Ahab followed this lenient course toward Ben-hadad because he wished an alliance with him against the threatening power of Assyria. But the fixed determination of Ahab to get possession of these cities, as soon as he was convinced that Ben-hadad did not intend to restore them, indicates that he had put too much con-

fidence in Ben-hadad's word. It is singular that men like Ahab can rely fully on the word of a fellow man, and yet thoroughly distrust the pledges of Jehovah. But disloyalties to God weaken our confidence in Him. And Ahab, who had had so many proofs through Elijah's ministry of Jehovah's existence and power and fidelity, could refuse to give God the loyalty that he gave to Ben-hadad and expected from him.

External pressure had brought Israel and Judah together against Damascus; it also united them temporarily against Moab. The campaign of the two Hebrew kings against the Moabites was replete with incidents fitted to increase the confidence of the leaders and their armies in the God of Israel. The expedition had been saved in the desert by a wonderful supply of water (2 Ki. 3:20). An optical illusion enticed their enemies to destruction (2 Ki. 3:21-25). Jehovah promised to give them the victory (2 Ki. 3:18). But



*From the "Leeper photographs," copyrighted.*

**Elisha's Fountain, at Jericho.**

**The place where Elisha healed the waters. This fountain still gives a copious supply of good water.**

all went for naught because the Hebrew hosts did not believe sufficiently in Jehovah to withstand the tremendous demonstration by the king of Moab of his belief in his god (2 Ki. 3:27). And so the historian enables us to trace back each one of these mistakes and defeats to its real cause—want of thorough, loyal allegiance to Jehovah.

And yet the narrative, on the other hand, makes it

clear that Jehovah did not desert His people. Elisha carried on the work of Elijah. Let us not forget that it was the corrupt northern kingdom which Jehovah delivered from the hand of Syria at Dothan (2 Ki. 6:8-23) and at Samaria (2 Ki. ch. 7), and that the very changes that were taking place in Damascus were ordered by Jehovah with reference to the Hebrew states (2 Ki. ch. 8).

## CHAPTER XXX.

### THE CLASH OF FORCES.

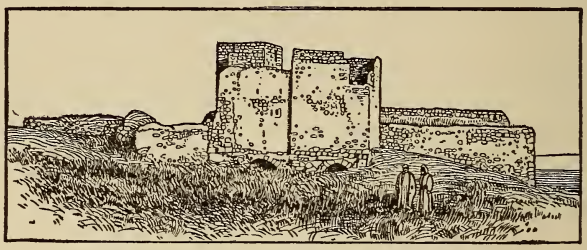
2 Ki. chs. 9-13.

Moral and spiritual forces do not develop their proper results unopposed and unhindered. Good and evil are always in conflict. The resultant of interaction and antagonism is never the ideal good, or complete evil. The contribution that any period makes to true civilization and religion depends upon whether or not the moral and spiritual forces make any appreciable headway against the lower desires. There have been epochs in which the higher tendencies, regarded by themselves, have not been insignificant or feeble; but the lower proclivities of rulers and people have been so disproportionately stronger that the net outcome of the period has been a loss of the nobler characteristics of national life. Great moral agencies were in operation but, great as they were, they were overmatched and overborne by the tremendous forces of selfishness and passion.

The period of the revolution under Jehu conforms to this general description. Moral forces were at work of no mean order. For example, the deep resentment of the whole people at the judicial murder of Naboth indicates the existence of a sound moral sense. Even the great house of Omri was threatened by an aroused public opinion. There is something essentially wholesome in the moral life of a people when a wrong done to an individual arouses the whole nation, as the injustice to Dreyfus aroused France, or as the outrage upon Naboth aroused Israel.

Then, too, Elisha, by methods quite different from those of Elijah, had succeeded in organizing effectively the widespread antagonism to the worship of the Phœnician Baal, which had been introduced by Jezebel. These two conditions made it comparatively easy

for Jehu, with the support of Elisha, to overthrow the house of Omri, putting Jezebel to a shameful death (2 Ki. 9: 30-37), exterminating the seed royal, accord-



Ruins at Jezreel, the Site of Jezebel's Palace.

ing to the custom of Oriental despots (2 Ki. 10: 1-12), and wreaking signal vengeance upon the prophets of Baal (2 Ki. 10: 18-28).

But the zeal of Jehu failed at the crisis. He could be fierce enough against the foreign idolatry introduced by Jezebel, but very tolerant toward the heathenism of bull-worship that was so deep-seated in the life of Israel. "Thus Jehu destroyed Baal out of Israel. Howbeit from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, wherewith he made Israel to sin, Jehu departed not from after them, to wit, the golden calves that were in Beth-el, and that were in Dan" (2 Ki. 10: 28, 29). Thus reform in the northern kingdom proceeded to a certain extent, when it was sharply brought to a halt by the inveterate heathenism of Jehu, in which he appears to have had a large popular support.

At this point a new factor enters the situation. The historian sees what the prophets were soon to emphasize, namely, that the God of Israel was so truly the Lord of the whole earth that He used foreign nations as the instrument of His will upon Israel. "In those days Jehovah began to cut off from Israel: and Hazael [whom Elijah was commissioned to anoint as king of

Damascus (1 Ki. 19: 15-17)] smote them in all the borders of Israel" (2 Ki. 10:32). The power of Jehovah to counteract and punish evil is not limited to the forces resident in the specific situation. Damascus and Egypt and Assyria work out His purposes upon Israel (Amos 9:7).

When we pass to the southern kingdom we see a similar contest between the forces of good and evil, with apparently greater advantage on the side of the evil. The alliance between Israel and Judah resulted in placing the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, through her marriage to Jehoram, son of Jehoshaphat, upon the throne of Judah. Athaliah was the daughter of Jezebel not only after the flesh but after the spirit. She succeeded in breaking up the temple of Jehovah, and probably used its materials in constructing the shrine of Baal (2 Chron. 24:7). On the death of Ahaziah at the hands of Jehu, Athaliah seized the throne, and to render her position impregnable destroyed the seed royal, massacring all of her own grandchildren, except Joash, who was preserved in hiding (2 Ki. 11:1-3). The rallying of the people about the youthful king, when Jehoiada exhibited him in public, indicates that the moral sense of the nation revolted from the crimes and idolatries of Athaliah. The description of the covenant "between Jehovah and the king and the people," and of the whole-hearted action of the nation, and of the thorough reconstruction of the house of Jehovah (2 Ki. 11:17, 18; 12:4-17), points toward an underlying loyalty to Jehovah in Judah to which there is no parallel in Israel. This fact does something to explain why it was that Judah, and not Israel, became the torch-bearer of the true worship of God.

And yet, as we ponder the story of this epoch, we can hardly rid ourselves of the conviction that good overcomes evil only by narrow margins. The issue of the battle long trembles in the balance. But that conviction, depressing as it may seem at first sight, gives rise to a great incentive and a great inspiration.

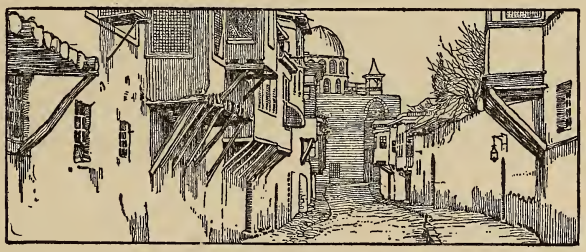
It moves us to believe that the good work of every individual is indispensable in this great conflict, and that He who sits upon the circle of the heavens will give the final victory to the good.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

### THE PERIL OF PROSPERITY.

2 Ki. 14 : 1—15 : 7; 2 Chron. ch. 26; Amos.

Jeroboam II of Israel and Uzziah of Judah were able administrators, superior to most of their predecessors, but they could not have brought about the conditions of general prosperity that marked their reigns, if it had not been for the contemporary political situation in the Semitic world. The northern kingdom, whose location made it sustain the brunt of attacks from the east, had proved that single-handed it was no match for Damascus. During the greater part of his reign Hazael of Damascus had been free to carry on a devastating war against Israel, because Assyria was fully occupied in holding its own against the rising power of its northern rival, Armenia. When, however, Assyria was free to attend to the eastern provinces, it dealt the son of Hazael a crushing blow, and Damascus

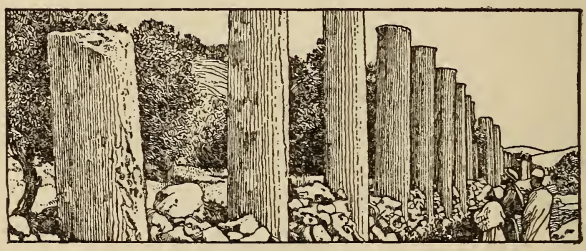


A Street in Damascus.

was only saved from pillage by the payment of a vast ransom. It became evident to far-seeing men, like the prophet Amos, that if Assyria found her hands free for any length of time, Samaria and Jerusalem would share the fate of Damascus, but, for forty years after this, the hands of Assyria were not free, or she was

weakly ruled. When, however, Tiglath-pileser III—the Pul of 2 Ki. 15:19—usurped the throne of Assyria, B. C. 745, what the statesmen of western Asia had seen to be inevitable, in the long run, began to take place. The period of prosperity for the two kingdoms is the lull between the Assyrian defeat of Damascus, and the putting forth of Assyrian power in Palestine under the generalship of Tiglath-pileser III.

The natural resources and the advantages of the commercial position of Palestine are impressively shown in the remarkable material prosperity which followed the withdrawal of the menace of Damascus and Assyria. The land yielded abundantly. Uzziah of Judah revived the project of Solomon of opening and defending the commercial routes to the trade of Arabia (2 Ki. 14:22), while the military capacity of Jeroboam II enlarged the borders of Israel to their old limits in the palmiest days of David.



Ruins at Samaria.

Our information about the situation in Israel is much more complete than about Judah. Similar general conditions, however, prevailed in both kingdoms. The picture that Amos draws is most impressive. He represents Samaria as enjoying unparalleled luxury. Some of his graphic phrases remind one of Juvenal's descriptions of Roman ostentation and sensuality. And the new wealth was so unequally distributed that in the rise of prices the poor and the middle class found

themselves in a desperate case, while the rich wallowed in costly indulgences. Sudden riches also produced their usual effect. The rich became hard-hearted and oppressive. They would sell a poor man into slavery for debt for a pair of cheap sandals (Amos 2:6). The religious situation became peculiar. Baal worship, even, does not appear to be greatly in evidence. There was a revival of the worship of Jehovah as the peculiar deity of the Hebrews, but this worship was purely external and formal. It consisted in a magnificent ritual and costly sacrifices. It did not come from the heart or influence the moral life (Amos 5:21-24).

The prophet Amos, who, though born in Judah, appeared in the northern kingdom at just this juncture. was one of the sovereign personalities in the spiritual history of mankind. It is to him that we owe the most brilliant and majestic assertion of the inevitable inferences from monotheism. The Hebrews could have had no doubt as to the righteous character of Jehovah, and as to His demand for righteousness in those who worshiped Him. Amos reasserted this truth, but he gave it tremendous force by proclaiming or reasserting that Jehovah was not simply the God of the Hebrews or of Palestine, but the God of all nature, of the whole earth, and of all men and nations. "He that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what is his thought; that maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth—Jehovah, the God of hosts, is his name" (Amos 4:13). "Have not I brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt, and the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Syrians from Kir?" (Amos. 9:7.) The deliverance of Israel from Egypt was not more the work of Jehovah than the advances of the Philistines or the campaigns of the Syrians. The nations themselves—Damascus in all her pride, and Tyre in all her wealth, and Babylon in all her dominion —are only instruments in the hand of Jehovah, the God of Israel, to work His will. And since righteous-

ness is supreme in the character of Jehovah, righteousness is at the heart of nature, and the interests of righteousness are transcendent in the development of human history. Amos added to his assertion of the righteousness and universality of Jehovah's rule a third truth, namely, that the covenant relation in which the Hebrews stood to Jehovah so far from involving immunity from the penalties of unrighteousness carried with it a more exacting requirement and a severer punishment. "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will visit upon you all your iniquities" (Amos 3:2).

We have seen that foreign idolatries had been quite thoroughly banished from both kingdoms at this period. But the reception which the great spiritual message of Amos met shows that mere worldliness, devotion to pleasure, absorption in the material aspects of life may render the heart as impervious to spiritual religion as the worship of a false god (Amos 7:10-15). The first commandment is not simply directed against the worship of idols made of wood or stone—we may make idols of our own pleasures and imaginations. That is exactly what Israel did in this period of marvelous prosperity, and her ears were as dull to the prophetic message, and her heart was as far from Jehovah as when the cult of the Tyrian Baal was fascinating the people under the patronage of Jezebel.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

### THE ROD OF JEHOVAH.

Selections and External History.

Amos was the first of the prophets to grasp the magnificent conception that the whole course of human history is controlled by Jehovah, and that it advances His purpose. In the earlier writings of the Hebrews you find distinct recognition of the fact that Jehovah enabled Israel to conquer her enemies. Indeed, the prevailing conception of Jehovah is colored by the fact that He had brought His people "out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage"—a description that stands at the forefront of the ten commandments, and furnishes their ground and motive. The Hebrews also had come to recognize that Jehovah, because of their disobedience, often gave the victory in war to their enemies, as at Ai (Josh. 7:5, 11, 12). But in all these representations the field of vision is limited. It is restricted to the immediate occasion and environment. The largest generalization reached before Amos seems to have been something like this: Jehovah would bring it about that His people would conquer their enemies and establish a state kingdom, if they were loyal to Him. Amos went beyond this. He said that the Ethiopians, the Philistines and the Syrians were as absolutely under the control of Jehovah as the Israelites. He had brought the Philistines from Caphtor and the Syrians from Kir as truly as He had brought Israel out of Egypt (Amos 9:7). The doctrine of Amos is not simply that Jehovah is powerful enough to enable Israel to defeat her enemies, but that Philistia and Tyre and Damascus are as absolutely in the hand of Jehovah to accomplish His purpose as Samaria or Jerusalem. The man who laid the firm foundation for a philosophy of history was not Augustine in his *"De Civitate Dei,"* or Vico of Italy, or Bos-

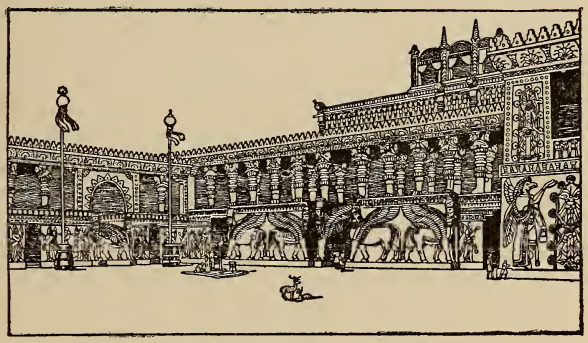
suet of France, or Herder of Germany, but Amos of Tekoa.

Recent investigations in the valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates have thrown a flood of light upon the nature and history of the Kingdom of Assyria. We now know that it was one of the greatest, possibly the greatest, of the world empires, and that the history of the Hebrews was almost as profoundly affected by what was taking place in the Mesopotamian valley as by the events on the hills of Samaria or within the walls of Jerusalem. Looked at broadly, Hebrew history during this whole period is a side eddy in the mighty inrush of Assyrian power, and when the tide of Assyrian conquest filled full the banks of the ancient world the Hebrew kingdoms were swept within it, as the ark of bulrushes in which the infant Moses was concealed in some cove of the Nile would have been swept out into the flood at the rising of the mighty river.

Assyrian Winged Lion.

We have already seen that the full generation of prosperity, which the two Hebrew kingdoms enjoyed during the reign of Jeroboam II and Uzziah, coincided with the period during which Damascus was lying prostrate from the blows already inflicted by Assyria, and Assyria herself had passed into a decline. From this weakness the great empire was rescued by Tiglath-pileser III, who, after subduing his enemies in the east, reconquered northern Syria. Under Shalmaneser IV, Sargon and Sennacherib, the full storm burst on Palestine. The Assyrian advance partook of the energy and irresistibleness of an elemental force.

It was like the sirocco of the desert. Before the tremendous Assyrian power all Palestine was over-run, except Jerusalem, which became a vassal state; Egypt itself was invaded, and Thebes fell in 660. Ezekiel's famous description of Assyrian glory does not appear to be in the least exaggerated (Ezek. 31: 3-9).



**An Assyrian Palace, Restored.**

When we remember that Nineveh fell only fifty-three years after the Assyrian conquest of Thebes, that the prophecies of Zephaniah and Nahum had almost immediate fulfilment, and that the crash of Assyrian power was so absolute that two centuries later the very locality of her capital had been forgotten, only to be determined beyond a doubt in 1845 A. D., we get a fresh and vivid impression of the suddenness and completeness with which the sceptre of world power was snatched from the victorious and arrogant hand of Assyria. It is probably well within the truth to say that there is no parallel in human history to the swiftness and totality of the destruction of Assyria.

Though Amos foresaw the Assyrian conquest of Israel (6: 14), he did not foresee the fall of Assyria. That fact makes his attitude the more remarkable. What he did was to grasp with singular tenacity the truth that Assyria was wholly at the disposal of Jehovah. He believed that Jehovah could not only give

the victory on occasion to His people, but that Assyria herself could do nothing that did not advance the purpose of Jehovah. Assyria, to his mind, was as absolutely in the hands of Jehovah as the Hebrew people.

It is easy for us to see how this conviction gave rise to the serene confidence that marks the close of Amos' prophecy (9:11-15). To his mind Assyria was simply, as Isaiah phrased it, the axe with which Jehovah hewed, the saw, the rod, the staff that He wielded (Is. 10:15). Amos said that the righteous Jehovah is the universal sovereign who controls the events of history so that the outcome will be the fulfilment of His righteous will, even though Israel falls before Assyria. When we set before our minds the historical circumstances in which this confidence on a world scale came to birth, we shall not be slow to recognize in the herdsman prophet an almost unmatched intensity and breadth of spiritual vision.

It is a long journey from Amos and Samaria, alive to the Assyrian menace, to our own day, but what truth is there to which we come back, in our times of anxiety and dread, for consolation and confidence, but the truth which Amos saw so clearly? God rules. We are in His hand. All men are in His hand. All history is but the revelation of His purpose.

**"Some trust in chariots, and some in horses;**
**But we will make mention of the name of**
**Jehovah our God."** **Ps. 20:7.**

There come times when there are no chariots, and no horses, but there never comes a time when we cannot trust in God.

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

### TRUSTING IN PRINCES.

2 Ki. 15 : 32—16 : 20; Is. 7 : 1—9 : 7.

The Hebrews, up to the time of the captivity, never learned the lesson that Jehovah would protect the people whom He had delivered from Egypt with a mighty arm, if they were true to Him. David the shepherd lad could see in past mercies a token of present deliverance, when he said to Saul, "Jehovah that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine" (1 Sam. 17:37). That was a height of faith to which the nation could not rise.

We are now in the upper reaches of the rapids whose terrific swirl and rush are carrying Israel and Judah over the Niagara precipice, not only of national ruin, but of national extinction. The only possible deliverance was in the Hand that thrust back the waters of the Red Sea to make a highway out of Egypt. But, with a fatuity that exasperates and harrows the heart of the student of their history, they sought for help in every direction except where help was to be found. In the graphic figure of Jeremiah: "My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (Jer. 2:13).

The actual historical situation is quite clear. Tiglath-pileser—the Pul of 2 Ki. 15:19—who usurped the throne of Assyria in 745, was one of the great sovereigns of history. Like Julius Caesar and Napoleon he was equally great in the field as a general and in the council chamber as a statesman. All Assyria, to the remotest provinces, vibrated with the thrill of his masterly energy and administrative capacity. Damascus and Israel saw the thick-gathering clouds of the coming storm. Before the common peril, like savage

beasts in a cave when the thunderclap shakes the earth, they forgot their animosities, and made a hurried alliance against the Assyrian. They saw the importance of the co-operation of Judah, and, since Ahaz, king of Judah, was unwilling to join them, they sought to compel the assistance of the southern kingdom, by besieging Jerusalem. They hoped to capture the city, usurp the government and use the resources of the kingdom against the common enemy. Ahaz was strong enough to repel this attack, but his situation was made exceedingly precarious by the invasions of the Edomites and Philistines, who never lost an opportunity to humble their hereditary enemies (2 Chron. 28:17, 18). At this juncture Isaiah lifted up his voice. He not only had been brought up and lived in Jerusalem, but he seems to have been of royal blood. He had begun to prophesy sixteen years before, and abstracts of his discourses up to this time are preserved in the first six chapters of the book that bears his name.

Tiglath-pileser in his Chariot.

Ahaz had reached the conviction that the best way out of his difficulties was to seek the help of the great Assyrian against his enemies. Against this policy Isaiah uttered his vehement protest. He saw two things clearly; that the two northern kingdoms, Damascus and Israel (Ephraim) were doomed before the victorious advance of Tiglath-pileser; they were only the stumps of two smoking torches, with the fire nearly out (Is. 7:4). He also saw that the intervention of Tiglath-pileser in the affairs of Palestine at the request

of Judah meant that Judah would become as absolutely a province of Assyria as if it had been conquered by arms. The scheme of Ahaz meant certain destruction. The constructive policy of Isaiah is equally clear. The Assyrian king, he said, is certain to subjugate Damascus and Israel, the enemies that are now threatening Judah. Let events take their course, and let Judah trust in Jehovah's sovereign purpose for her. If Judah served Jehovah with a perfect heart that purpose would involve the preservation of the whole nation. But, in spite of the general apostasy, there is in Judah a holy "remnant" (Is. 1:9) through which the divine purpose will be accomplished, and that involves the continued political existence of Judah.

It may be impossible for us to describe with minute detail the "sign" which Isaiah gave to Ahaz (Is. 7: 14). But Hebrew and Christian thought surely has not been astray is seeing in his words (9: 6, 7), a sublime confidence that Jehovah would inaugurate a new era of righteousness and peace through the birth and life and work of the promised Child. Whatever our construction of specific words there runs through the description of the confidence of Isaiah as a waterline runs through a sheet of paper, or as a figure gleams forth from a mosaic, the Messianic hope and promise.

The Prophet Isaiah.
By Michael Angelo.

We can hardly imagine a more dramatic contrast than that between the weak and vacillating Ahaz, looking only on the things that are seen, and for that very reason deficient even in worldly wisdom, making his

shallow and deceptive peace with the lord of Assyria (2 Ki. 16:7-10) and giving the Assyrian worship an equal place with that of Jehovah in Jerusalem (2 Ki. 16:15-18), and Isaiah, looking at the unseen forces in human history, and for that very reason the more astute in practical statesmanship, confident of the fulfilment of the purpose of Jehovah.

But even this contrast pales before the contrast between Tiglath-pileser, the passing world-conqueror, and the Child that Isaiah saw. "And the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end . . . to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from henceforth even for ever" (Is. 9:6,7).

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

### SIN BRINGETH FORTH DEATH.

2 Ki. 15 : 8-31; ch. 17.

To the eye of Amos the condition of the northern kingdom, even in the prosperous days of Jeroboam II, was symbolized by "a basket of summer fruit" (Amos 8:1), fair to look upon, but dead ripe, and containing within itself the seeds of speedy destruction.

The outward menace of the rising power of Assyria under Tiglath-pileser was supplemented by the inner menace of social and moral deterioration. The oppression practiced by the privileged classes upon the people at large, the outrageous development and abuse of monopolies, aroused the fiercest indignation of the prophet, and indicated to him the near approach of a catastrophe.

Hosea, who lived immediately before the fall of Samaria, saw all that Amos saw, but at closer range. In his time the "basket of summer fruit" had lost all its fairness, it was fast becoming a decaying and putrefying mass. The hints that Hosea has given us of the internal condition of Israel reveal a state of affairs that would foretoken the fall of any state (Hos. chs. 4, 7). On the one hand, the nation had been dominated by such a spirit of faction that in the twenty years after the death of Jeroboam II, four of the six kings who succeeded him has been assassinated, and one carried away into captivity. The strife between the Assyrian and the anti-Assyrian parties had resulted in such a treacherous national policy toward Assyria that it was not strange that the great suzerain kingdom should have resolved to reduce its vassal to a position in which it would make no further trouble. On the other hand, the public and private vices that Amos denounced had reached such a pitch that the priesthood itself had become a center of corruption (Hos. 6:9). In the days

of Hosea the clouds that Amos saw upon the horizon had gathered themselves into a black and mighty mass from which the lightnings flashed.

The thunderbolt fell twice upon the northern kingdom. In 734 B. C., Tiglath-pileser subdued all the territory of Israel, except the few miles about Samaria. On the death of the great king, Samaria sought to secure its freedom from Assyria by an alliance with Egypt (2 Ki. 17:4), but that was a vain hope, and Sargon—succeeding Shalmaneser IV, who had conquered all Samaria except the city—in 722 captured the city itself, weakened by pestilence and starvation, which was given up to plunder. Nearly thirty thousand of its inhabitants were carried into captivity and an Assyrian governor, who could be trusted, was placed over those who were suffered to remain near the seats of their fathers.

Assyrians Taking Away Captives and Spoil.

The immediate or secondary causes of this catastrophe, by which Israel lost its identity as a nation, are evident enough to any reader of the narrative in the books of Kings, with the light thrown upon it by Amos and Hosea. It is almost incredible, in view of the power of Assyria under Tiglath-pileser, and in view of the disorganization and corruption in Israel, that the kingdom should not fall. But all three writers—the author of the Kings and the prophets Amos and Hosea—unite in attributing the fall of Samaria to a cause that lies behind all these immediate and secondary

causes. They all attribute the fall of Israel to the nation's apostasy from Jehovah. The prophecies read like a comment and exposition of the sober historical statement in the Kings: "And it was so, because the children of Israel had sinned against Jehovah their God, who brought them up out of the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other gods, and walked in the statutes of the nations, whom Jehovah cast out from before the children of Israel, and of the kings of Israel, which they made" (2 Ki. 17:7, 8).

The Biblical writers look beyond the immediate occasion, and see the transcendent significance of the moral and spiritual factor in the developments of history. Israel fell, they say, not because Tiglath-pileser was one of the great military geniuses of the world, and because he was followed by exceedingly able and determined men. Israel fell, they say, not because the spirit of faction and social injustice and immorality prevailed in the northern kingdom, but "it was so, because the children of Israel had sinned against Jehovah their God." The whole tremendous evolution is traced back to its moral and spiritual cause—apostasy from Jehovah.

It does not militate against the correctness of this analysis that the political disorganization, the social injustice and the personal immoralities which were rife in Samaria were the direct outcome of Israel's infidelity to Jehovah, and that this political, social and moral condition ministered directly to the overthrow of the nation. Many, perhaps most, of the results of sin, manifest themselves in conditions which become the immediate causes of the penalty of sin. The course of vice, for example, which weakens mind and body, is, on the one hand, due to sin, and, on the other hand, the cause of one penalty of the sin. The immediate cause is a link between the sin and its penalty. But all of the results of sin do not sustain this relation. The sin of Israel was not the cause of the

military genius and administrative capacity of Tiglath-pileser, which pushed the borders of Assyria clear to the coasts of the Mediterranean, thus creating the awful menace to Israel. There is no link in the realm of human causation between the sin of Israel and the ability and policy of Tiglath-pileser, but there is such a link in the mind of God. And, as Amos and Isaiah saw so clearly, He can use Assyria or Egypt to visit upon Israel and Judah the penalties for their apostasy from Him. The resources of Jehovah to reward or to punish, to protect and deliver, or to overturn and destroy, are not measured by the natural sequences of events.

"Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help,
Whose hope is in Jehovah his God:
Who made heaven and earth,
The sea, and all that in them is; . . .
Jehovah loveth the righteous; . . .
But the way of the wicked he turneth upside down."
Ps. 146:5-9.

Sargon, the Captor of Samaria, and his Vizier.

## CHAPTER XXXV.

### THE HAND OF JEHOVAH.

2 Ki. chs. 18-20.

Isaiah believed that Jerusalem was inviolable. No matter how dark the prospect, even though Samaria fell before the advance of Assyria, he never once swerved from the conviction that Jerusalem was safe because she was the city of the Holy One of Israel. If the forty-eighth Psalm commemorates the deliverance of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib, we hear in its exultant notes the song that was in the heart of Isaiah before prophecy had become history:

"God hath made himself known in her palaces for a refuge.
For, lo, the kings assembled themselves,
They passed by together.
They saw it, then were they amazed;
They were dismayed, they hasted away.
Trembling took hold of them there,
Pain, as of a woman in travail. . . .
As we have heard, so have we seen
In the city of Jehovah of hosts, in the city of our God:
God will establish it for ever." Ps. 48 : 3-6, 8.

Isaiah had done his best to prevent Ahaz from seeking to gain the safety of Jerusalem by making the city a vassal of Assyria. He believed that the true policy of Judah was that of "splendid isolation." If she was to be saved it must be by the hand of Jehovah, and not by any alliances or agreements. There was no sound guarantee that the king of Assyria would respect the rights of a vassal when it would serve his purpose to disregard them. In his opinion Ahaz had impoverished the kingdom and lost its independence for the sake of a promise that could not be trusted.

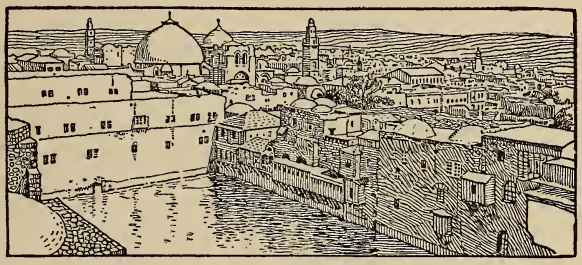
After the death of Ahaz, for some reason that can only be conjectured, the Assyrian party in Jerusalem lost most of its following. Two policies then came to

the front. A considerable faction thought that there was hope for Judah in an alliance with Egypt, which under the new Ethiopian dynasty, in the person of Shabaka, appeared to be entering upon a stronger international position. Isaiah led the party that was opposed to this policy. Though he had bitterly opposed the agreement that made Judah a vassal of Assyria, yet he held that, since the agreement had been made, it should be adhered to. From a purely political point of view he utterly distrusted the strength and the promises of Egypt. He saw clearly that, even if Egypt were strong and faithful, Judah, as the buffer state between Egypt and Assyria, would certainly be ground to powder in any conflict between these two great powers.

The religious reforms of Hezekiah had the cordial support of Isaiah. They were more thorough than any previous king of Judah had attempted (2 Chron. chs. 29-31). The prosperity and increase of national strength that accompanied them illuminates the habitual assertion of the historians and prophets that the people were afflicted because they "obeyed not the voice of Jehovah their God, but transgressed his covenant, even all that Moses the servant of Jehovah command, and would not hear it, nor do it" (2 Ki. 18:12). The author of the kings says of Hezekiah what had been said of no king since David, "Jehovah was with him," and he adds, "whithersoever he went forth he prospered" (2 Ki. 18:7). It seems to be clear that the kingdom recovered from the poverty occasioned by the tribute of Ahaz to Assyria (2 Ki. 20:13; comp. 16:8), and that its territory was in part won back from the Philistines. The defenses of Jerusalem were greatly strengthened, and the provision made for a constant supply of water within the city by means of a subterranean passage (2 Ki. 20:20; 2 Chron. 32:30; Ecclus. 48:17) which was discovered in 1880 A. D.

If we were more certain of the chronology of the reign of Hezekiah we could speak more confidently

of his policy in revolting from Assyria as an indication of his character. The strong probability seems to be that during the last years of Sargon all Palestine was seething with the spirit of revolt against Assyria. Sar-



Hezekiah's Pool, Jerusalem.

gon, however, met the first symptoms of actual rebellion with such swift vengeance that at the time of his death peace had been nominally restored. Largely through the efforts of Isaiah Judah kept out of this intrigue against her suzerain. The politicians of Western Asia, however, regarded the assassination of Sargon in 705 B. C. as marking the close of an era. It did not seem probable that Tiglath-pileser and Sargon could be succeeded by a general as great as either of them. The fugitive king of Babylon, Merodach-baladan, who had been conquered by Sargon four years previously, returned to Babylon and raised the standard of revolt against Assyria. If we place at this period the visit to Hezekiah of the ambassadors from Babylon (*2* Ki. 20: 12, 13), ostensibly to congratulate him on his recovery from sickness, we see that this visit was a skilful attempt to draw Hezekiah into the Babylonian-Palestinian-Egyptian alliance against Assyria. Hezekiah was intensely flattered by this attention, and revealed to the ambassadors all his resources. Thus Hezekiah, against the counsels of his wisest adviser, was drawn into the conspiracy, and "rebelled against the king of Assyria, and served him not." (*2*

Ki. 18:7). Undoubtedly this policy was immensely popular in Jerusalem. It had all the marks of independence and high spirit that win general support.

But a third eagle came forth from the royal nest of Assyria. Sennacherib immediately reduced Babylon, and then advanced upon Palestine, conquering Phœnicia, the Palestine lowlands, Samaria and an Egyptian army that was hurrying north to the relief of the allies. The cylinders have preserved a full account of this campaign from the Assyrian point of view. Hezekiah at this juncture saw no way of escape but to make terms with Sennacherib by the payment of an enormous indemnity (2 Ki. 18:14-16).

**Sennacherib on his Throne.**

From the bas-relief of the capture of Lachish, which occurred during this invasion of Palestine. Found in the ruins of Sennacherib's palace at Nineveh, and now in the British Museum.

We do not know how long this peace lasted, but the demand of Sennacherib for an unconditional surrender of Jerusalem was the almost inevitable result of the relation of Judah to Assyria. It was at this time that the faith of Isaiah rose to its loftiest height. The darker the situation to the eye of the statesman, the clearer it became to the vision of the prophet. The reply of Isaiah to the Rabshakeh matches the most heroic defiances of Greek or Roman history (2 Ki. 19:6).

The situation was indeed desperate. It seemed as if the eagle were just about to swoop upon the dove. The watchers upon the walls of the city must have seen at night upon the horizon the gleam of the fires of the mighty Assyrian host. But Isaiah insisted that

the Lord would defend the city and save it (2 Ki. 19:34).

And Jehovah vindicated the faith of His servant. In a single night "the angel of the Lord" smote the Assyrian host with a pestilence or a panic, and Jerusalem was saved. It was one of the great deliverances of history, and it showed that Isaiah had firmly grasped the central purpose of God, behind and beneath the events of his time. He saw that nothing, not even Assyria, could prevail against the purpose of Jehovah, and that kings, armies and empires were simply the instruments of His will.

Sennacherib.

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

### THE WORD OF THE LORD.

2 Ki. 21 : 1—23 : 30; Jer. 11 : 1-8.

Throughout the reign of Manasseh there was a strong reaction from the reforms instituted by Hezekiah. In a sense this reaction was inevitable. The measures of Hezekiah were those of the typical Puritan, who relies quite as much upon force as upon commending his ideas to the consciousness of others. The excesses of the reign of Charles II in England repeated the story of the reign of Manasseh in Judah. The king was made a captive and with great indignities carried to Babylon. His name is found upon the monuments, where he is recorded as one of the tributary kings of Esar-haddon. The reforms of Manasseh's mature age did not strike deep root, and there was not much religious improvement throughout the nation, until the young Josiah came to the throne.

Esar-haddon.
From the monuments.

For six years Josiah had been zealously uprooting idolatry. But he had made comparatively little progress toward a thorough reform until one of those apparently trivial incidents occurred upon which great issues often turn, and forthwith Josiah's work received a marked spiritual impulse.

That incident was the discovery, during some repairs upon the temple, of a copy of "the book of the law." Some suppose that this scroll was the entire Pentateuch; others that it was the whole or the major part of the book of Deuteronomy. The data for determining which view is correct are variously inter-

preted, and the answers, while of importance to the Biblical critic, would not affect, in the least, the religious significance of the narrative.

Whatever the nature of the book, or its origin, it is clear, in the first place, from the consternation with which the king and the people listened to the reading, that its contents came as a fresh disclosure of the will of Jehovah, and, in the second place, that these contents, whoever the author may have been, were confirmed as a trustworthy divine revelation by the prophetess Huldah (2 Ki. 22: 14-20) and by Jeremiah the prophet (Jer. 11: 1-5).

We may note in passing that while to-day the printing press has made it impossible that the Bible should be lost as a volume of literature, it is possible for the revelation of the Most High to sink out of our consciousness, through our indifference to it, as it sank out of the consciousness of Judah. Or, when we are not indifferent to it, we may easily suffer the interpretations or opinions of some men, who have happened to write books or creeds, to take the place of first-hand, open-eyed, open-hearted study of the Scriptures. When we do that we are in danger of losing the Word of the Lord. It is the duty of all Christians to assert their liberty in this matter, and to vindicate their liberty by conscientious personal study of the holy writings. Water that has been standing in a pitcher for a week we refuse to drink, unless we can get no other. At a fountain each wishes his own fresh draught. But in spiritual things we are wont to desert the fountain, and to drink what others have drawn and bring to our doors in musty barrels. It is wonderful how, when one with a reverent heart goes to the Scriptures for himself, he finds in them refreshment, strength and guidance. Then for the first time he finds the Book.

We can see at once what the discovery of this book meant to the reforms of Josiah. For one thing it gave Josiah and those who were with him in his work

a new basis for faith. Up to this time Josiah had been prompted by his own conscience and his perception of what was wise and right, corroborated by the prophetic reaction and the early preaching of Jeremiah. The discovery of this scroll gave him a new and conclusive divine warrant for what he was doing.

Those who prosecute unpopular reforms must often experience moments of supreme loneliness. They must find themselves inadvertently asking, "Is it possible that I am right about this thing and every one else wrong?" The strength of the great reformers has not been that their stubborn self-will was enough to carry them against the world. Their strength has been that, like Moses, they "saw the invisible." That was the experience of Josiah. Ewald, the great German historian of Israel, observes that "the discovery of this book gave a strong momentum to the reforms of Josiah, which had begun to lag." It must have been so. Now Josiah felt that his work rested upon a specific divine warrant, wholly external to himself, revealed to him in the providential discovery of this scroll. Our confidence in our plans is greatly strengthened when our wisest friends confirm our judgment. Josiah felt that the Most High Himself had confirmed his enterprise.

Then, too, we can hardly miss seeing how this discovery of "the book of the law" enlarged Josiah's outlook. With the scroll before him the true course of national reformation was plain. The book did not simply reveal the extent of the nation's departure from God—its sin—but it illuminated the way to a better life. We do well always to remember this double aspect of every divine revelation. Throughout the Scriptures God's calls to men are calls to blessedness. The disclosures of the nature of sin and its penalties, the stern prohibitions and almost heartbreaking warnings, are incidental to the great end of leading men to a broad, noble and happy life. It is the secular life that becomes narrow, bigoted, sordid,

self-limited and selfish. It is the life to which God calls men that becomes larger, fuller, finer, and that expands into the freedom of a sonship to which the whole wide universe is the Father's house. The great poem of praise of the divine law says

> "I have seen an end of all perfection;
> But thy commandment is exceeding broad."
> Ps. 119: 96.

It is broad in itself, and it broadens the outlook of the man who receives it.

The men who found that scroll of the law in the temple treasury came upon a far better thing than a great hoard of money. The words upon a parchment, that could be traced with a pen or uttered with a breath, were the most precious gift that could have come to Josiah or to Jerusalem. They confirmed a noble purpose, and they pointed the way to the noblest future.

The best gift we can bestow upon another is not any material thing whatever. The best gift is a word, some words of God, some fragment of His message to men—words that find some of their interpretation in our own hope and faith and love. We cannot give any one a choicer gift than that.

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

### THE CAPTURE OF JERUSALEM.

2 Ki. 23 : 31—24 : 17; Jer. ch. 36.

Nineveh, which had ruled the Semitic world with a rod of iron for two centuries, fell in 607 B. C., before the united armies of the Medes, under Cyaxares, and of the Babylonians (Chaldeans) under Nabopolassar. The tokens of the coming of this event could be seen many months before it took place. Both Josiah of Judah and Nebah, the Pharaoh of Egypt, were alert to take advantage of the feebleness of the power that had been their mighty over-lord. The former improved the opportunity to enlarge his kingdom so that it extended nearly to its old borders. The latter sought to push the power of Egypt even to the Euphrates. Josiah lost his life at the battle of Megiddo (608 B. C.), in which he attempted to dispute the passage of Necoh across his territory. The death of Josiah was a staggering event to the prophetical party which had supported his reform policies. They found it difficult to explain how Jehovah could permit such a disaster to so loyal a servant. The immediate effect of this battle was to make Judah the compulsory vassal of Egypt, but Necoh, intent on availing himself of the weakness of Nineveh, did not delay his advance to interfere with the internal affairs of Jerusalem. The prophetical party which held pos-

**Pharaoh-necoh.**
**From the monuments.**

session in Judah at once chose Jehoahaz, the younger son of Judah, as king, probably because he was friendly to their policy. When, three months later, Necoh gave his attention to the affairs of Judah, he deposed Jehoahaz and sent him in chains to Egypt (2 Ki. 23: 33) giving the throne of Judah to Eliakim (Jehoiakim), the eldest son of Josiah.

The ambitious plans of Necoh soon came to a halt. He had penetrated as far as the Euphrates, and perhaps may be said to have subjugated Western Asia, but he held dominion by an insecure tenure until he should have actually vanquished the rising power of Babylon, before which Nineveh had fallen. The royal house of Babylon, like that of Nineveh in the line of Tiglath-pileser, was singularly fortunate in the military capacity of its successive representatives, and there are few names in the history of warfare greater than that of Nebuchadnezzar, the son of Nabopolassar, the conqueror of Nineveh. Nebuchadnezzar, the crown prince, met Necoh in battle near Carchemish on the Euphrates. The result was an overwhelming victory for the arms of Babylon. "They are dismayed and are turned backward; and their mighty ones are beaten down, and are fled apace, and look not back: terror is on every side" (Jer. 46: 5). Many historians regard the battle of Carchemish as one of the decisive battles of the world. Certainly it settled whether the principal influence in the development of civilization was to be that of Babylon or that of Egypt.

Jeremiah, like Nahum, twenty years before, saw that no kingdom of Western Asia could make head against Babylon, which had succeeded to all the power of Assyria, and might even enhance it. But he took comfort in the philosophy of history that Amos had first promulgated, and that Isaiah had applied to the conquests of Assyria. Nebuchadnezzar is the servant of Jehovah, the instrument by which He accomplishes His purposes (Jer. 43: 10). But the thought of Jeremiah is an advance upon that of Isaiah.

To Isaiah Assyria was the instrument of Jehovah to chastise Israel; to Jeremiah Babylon is the instrument of Jehovah to destroy Israel as a nation. Out of this catastrophe was to emerge the spiritual Israel composed of individual souls loyal to Jehovah.

The Prophet Jeremiah.
By Michael Angelo.

Jeremiah's political counsel was that the kingdom should remain loyal to its lawful suzerain, Babylon, which had legally succeeded to the rights of Assyria. This was the only course that promised safety. In advocating this policy Jeremiah put himself into sharp antagonism with the king and the entire court party.

For a long time Jeremiah seems to have hoped that thorough repentance, on the part of the king and the people might lead Jehovah to avert the threatening peril. Surely he could deliver Jerusalem from Nebuchadnezzar, as He had delivered her from Sennacherib. But Jehoiakim repeated the worst excesses and idolatries of the period of Manasseh.

Jeremiah resorted to a unique device to get his views impressively before the nation—a significant evidence that, even at this late date, the kingship in Judah was amenable to the voice of the people. He collected the substance of his prophecies during the last twenty-three years, and induced Baruch to read them to the people, assembled in the temple-court during one of the great national gatherings. These prophecies had only an indirect bearing upon the immediate political situation. Their burden was the proclamation of the necessity of righteousness and

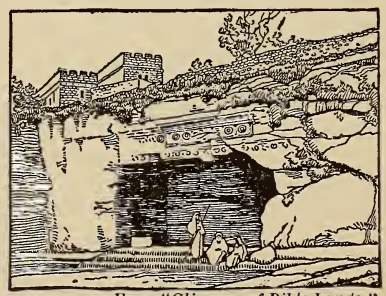
justice, and of fidelity to the law and worship of Jehovah; the certainty of judgment, and the duty of immediate repentance. Whatever the opinions of the people about the political policy Jeremiah advocated, this review of his prophecies would naturally convince them that he had spoken the word of Jehovah, and that even his political counsel was entitled to singular weight.

Jeremiah said that Jehoiakim should have the burial of an ass (Jer. 22:19). It may not be unfair to see in this forecast the prophet's estimate of his character. The conduct of the king when he examined the roll of the prophecies completely vindicated this judgment. "And it came to pass, when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, that the king cut it with the penknife, and cast it into the fire that was in the brazier, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that was in the brazier" (Jer. 36:23). Jehoiakim has had many imitators. He failed to distinguish between truth and the witness for it; between the eternal reality and the evidence for it. In destroying the witness or the evidence men do not touch the truth. That remains just what it was before. All they have done is to block up or destroy some of the channels through which the truth was coming to them. They have deprived themselves of some of the means of adjusting themselves to the truth. The reality of things, the counsel of the Most High, is not changed or affected a whit.

Jehoiakim pursued his policy of headlong folly. The engagement of Nebuchadnezzar with the home provinces led Jehoiakim to play small politics with the Egyptian court. It was the worst example of intriguing with a minority, for Egypt had been thoroughly beaten, and a child could have seen that her promises were vain. She had more to hope from Judah than Judah from her. At length, about four years after the succession of Nebuchadnezzar to the throne of Babylon, just as he was gaining a free hand to deal with the western problem, Jehoiakim renounced his

allegiance. At first Nebuchadnezzar looked at the new situation in a large way. His opinion of the character of Jehoiakim probably resembled that of Jeremiah. Really great men, however they may differ in race or position, have substantially identical judgments of character; Nebuchadnezzar seems to have thought that if he gave the king of Judah rope enough he would hang himself. He was probably right. But when the delay of the catastrophe became troublesome he took the field himself. Before the Chaldean army invested Jerusalem, however, the king of Judah died, and the results of wickedness and folly fell upon the lad of eighteen, Jehoiachin, who reigned only three months.

In five verses (2 Ki. 24: 12-16) the writer of the book of Kings describes the surrender of the city, and the beginning of the captivity in Babylon. We are aware as we read it that a tremendous episode in human history is closing in a way that belies its early promise. We seem to see the precious vessels torn from the temple, the royal household and the princes leading a forlorn procession of captives to the camp of Nebuchadnezzar; we hear the groans of strong men, and the cries and sobs of women. The beauty of Israel is slain upon her high places.



*From "Glimpses of Bible Lands."*

**The So-called Tombs of the Kings at Jerusalem.**

## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

### THE FULFILMENT OF DOOM.

2 Ki. 24 : 18—25 : 21; Jer. chs. 37, 38.

Between the capture and the final destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar there is a respite of eleven years. It was no part of the colonial policy of Assyria or Babylon to do any more injury to a conquered region than was necessary to guard against future insurrection. Usually a considerable number of the prominent men and their families were deported to a distant settlement, and those who remained were ruled by a trustworthy governor of their own race. This was the procedure of Nebuchadnezzar upon the capture of Jerusalem in 597 B. C. (2 Ki. 24 : 14-16).

The new governor of Jerusalem was Zedekiah (Mattaniah), the youngest son of Josiah and the full brother of Jehoahaz, who had been deposed by Necoh.

Thus Jerusalem was given another and last opportunity to continue as a semi-independent Hebrew city under the overlordship of Babylon. Strangely enough, the nation, which in the days of Isaiah had refused to believe the word of Jehovah that He would save the city, in the days of Jeremiah had a fatalistic confidence in its inviolability, though the prophet of Jehovah declared that it would fall. But this is only an illustration on a large scale of the familiar truth that those who find the revelation of the Most High incredible will often give their full confidence to unsupported theories or to silly conjectures.

There were only too good grounds in the situation for believing that Jeremiah's forecast would be fulfilled. The controlling fact was that the people who remained in Jerusalem did not show the slightest inclination to repent and return to their allegiance to Jehovah. To be sure, when Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to the city, and the realities of war confronted

them, they turned frantically to Jehovah, and solemnly engaged to observe the law as to the freedom of slaves (Jer. 34:8; Ex. 21:2; Deut. 15:12). But, during the respite occasioned by the departure of Nebuchadnezzar to engage the Egyptian army, when they thought that they were saved, their religious zeal for the service of Jehovah at once evaporated, and without delay they broke their recent pledge (Jer. 34:11). Nothing could better illustrate their half-hearted and purely self-interested service of Jehovah. As a matter of fact, the capture of Jerusalem in 597 B. C. had so profoundly shaken the faith of the people in Jehovah (Ezek. 8:12) that a mixture of idolatries, consisting of Phœnician, Syrian and Chaldean superstitions, was strongly established. The return to Jehovah, just mentioned, was simply a resort to anything that might save them. But it mattered not what alliances Judah might make with Egypt, Tyre and Ammon (Ezek. 17:15), there was no help for her so long as by her sin she arrayed Jehovah against her. The Hebrew poet wrote:

> "Jehovah is my light and my salvation;
> Whom shall I fear?
> Though a host should encamp against me,
> My heart shall not fear;
> Though war should rise against me,
> Even then will I be confident." Ps. 27: 1, 3.

And the converse is equally true:

> "There is no king saved by the multitude of a host;
> A mighty man is not delivered by great strength."
> Ps. 33 : 16.

The resources, the alliances, the courage of Jerusalem were all in vain when Jehovah was arrayed against her.

One reads the narrative of the series of events preceding the fall of the city as one would follow the unfolding of a tragedy the inevitable issue of which is seen from afar. There are rays of light and gleams of hope. Sometimes it seems as if all were not lost.

Jeremiah is in the city speaking the word of the Lord, and, though his prophecies are so explicit, we sometimes feel that they may be conditional. The secret interview of Zedekiah with Jeremiah (Jer. 37: 17-21) indicates the king's doubt as to the wisdom of his course, and the rescue of Jeremiah by the Ethiopian (Jer. 38: 7-13) shows that at least one true-hearted man recognized the fidelity of the prophet to his mission. And then, too, the alliance with Egypt and Tyre and Ammon promised much, for Egypt was regaining her international position, and Hophra, the new Pharaoh, seemed to be strong enough to render Zedekiah effective aid (Jer. 44: 30). Who would have supposed that at just this juncture Nebuchadnezzar was to demonstrate that he was one of the great military geniuses of history?

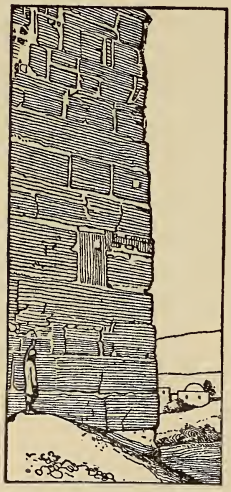
Still, the other aspects of the situation were very dark. Indeed, the reasons for hope only served to throw into stronger relief the inevitableness of the approaching doom. Judah is Laocoon struggling in the folds of the serpent. Her very efforts to extricate herself bind her the tighter. We have only to recall the subserviency of Zedekiah to "the princes,"

Anathoth, Jeremiah's Birthplace.

who were utterly without insight into the situation,—his subjection to them was so complete that Jeremiah puts a taunting song into the mouths of the women of the harem (Jer. 38 : 22),—the imprisonment of the prophet of Jehovah (Jer. 37 : 15; 38 : 6), and Zede-

kiah's violation of his oath to Nebuchadnezzar, which the author of the book of Kings (2 Ki. 24:20) and the prophet Ezekiel (Ezek. 17:12-15) regarded as a detestable breach of faith, almost justifying Nebuchadnezzar in making thorough work of pacifying Western Asia.

Slowly but inexorably the doom comes. The city was defended with superb courage. The book of Lamentations graphically sets before us some of the horrors of the siege (2:19-22; 4:10). Jerusalem fell in the summer of 586 B. C. The most influential citizens were deported (2 Ki. 25:12); practically everything of value was seized as a war indemnity (vss. 13-18); the walls were broken down, the temple, the palaces and the principal houses burned (vss. 9, 10), and the leading citizens put to death (vss. 19-22). Zedekiah, after witnessing the execution of his two sons, had his eyes put out. Josephus cites the fate of the king as a remarkable fulfilment of two apparently contradictory prophecies (Jer. 34:3; Ezek. 12:13).



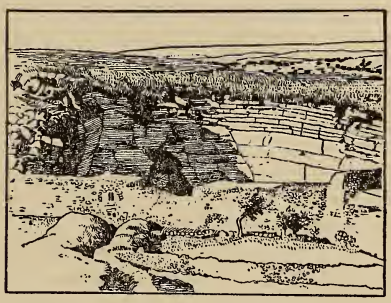
Corner of the Wall around the Temple Area.

This wall runs 80 feet below the surface of the ground to the solid rock. Many of the great stones have remained in position as they were originally laid in Solomon's time.

The fall of Jerusalem is one of the most tremendous object lessons the world has ever seen of the results of disloyalty to the Most High. There have been catastrophes as appalling, but the interior significance of this one has been interpreted by the prophets. We are left in no manner of doubt that Jerusalem fell when Jehovah, who had shielded her from Sennacherib, withdrew His hand because the measure

of her disloyalties was full. The destruction as well as the protection of Jerusalem showed that there was a God in Israel.

And yet the purpose of the Most High was not utterly thwarted by the wrath of man. The ideas, the hopes, the faith that made Judah the nation of Jehovah, the custodian of the highest revelation the world had known, were guarded by the little colony in Babylonia, and it was from this little group of exiles, purged by trouble of the last traces of polytheism, that there came the splendid light of the later prophets.



Jeremiah's Grotto.

## CHAPTER XXXIX.

### REVIEW OF CHAPTERS 27-38.

Several important truths are brought into a clear light when we examine, in a broad way, the three centuries and a half of Hebrew history which intervene between the division of the kingdom on the death of Solomon and the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar.

One is that the development of Israel is inextricably connected with the political institutions, the imperial ambitions and the colonial policies of the surrounding nations. You can no more isolate the history of the Hebrews from contemporary movements in other nations than you can isolate a tree from the soil in which it grows and have it remain a vital organism. The rivalries of Phœnicia and Damascus, of Egypt and Assyria, of Assyria and Babylon, and of Babylon and Egypt register themselves as clearly in the history of the Hebrew kingdoms, recorded in the Old Testament as the leagues between Germany, Austria and Italy on the one hand, and between Russia and France on the other, register themselves in the history of Great Britain during the last decade.

An important inference from this fact is that in order to understand the Bible we must understand a great many things outside the Bible. It is not too much to say that modern explorations in Egypt, Assyria and Chaldea are making the Old Testament a new book, instinct with life and reality. But a much more important inference is that no providence in the history of Israel is possible unless there is an equal providence over all nations, so that all their policies, in a true sense, are controlled by Him, and are as responsive to His purpose as the instrument in the hand of a skilful engraver to the working out of his design. Amos was the first to reach this conclusion from a somewhat

different point of view. He argued that the similarity of moral results among all peoples indicated that Jehovah was the supreme ruler of all nations. When we have an extended period of history before us like these three centuries and a half of the life of the Hebrew race, we see at once that, if the record discloses the progressive fulfilment of a purpose, as this certainly does, it must be because the complicated relations and reactions between Israel and the rest of the world were in the hands of the Most High.

Indeed, if history is anything more than a chronicle of unrelated events, if it has an interior, genetic unity, and is a movement that fulfils a purpose, the great generalization of Amos is inevitable. Tiglath-pileser is as truly the servant of the Most High as Hezekiah. Perhaps not even yet has the Christian world apprehended the full import of this truth. But it is because God holds this relation to human history, which these Hebrew records indicate, that we have the strongest pledge of the ultimate triumph of righteousness in the earth. The victory of the kingdom of Christ depends on this relation of God to human history (Mt. 28: 18).

Another truth, reflected in all this development, is the power of the human will to resist the Most High. We have seen this illustrated over and over again in the records of Israel and Judah. Neither kings nor people would heed the prophets. If there seems to be a contradiction between this truth and the one to which we have just referred, let us remember that the apparent antagonism is that between any theory of the divine sovereignty and of human freedom. Neither Calvinism nor Arminianism has ever been satisfactorily answered. The solution of this problem, like that of the question of the origin of evil, into which it runs back, is probably beyond the faculties of man. The facts of the case, however, as brought out in the Scripture and in human experience, are sufficiently evident. Men can refuse to obey God, but the

resources of God to accomplish His purposes are not limited to those means He would employ if men were obedient. We can easily conceive, for example, that the kingdom of David might have been perpetuated as a unit, and that kings and people might have been so devoted to the law of Jehovah that the history of Israel would have been the record of increasing devotion to righteousness and of spiritual enlightenment. But when the Hebrew people, in both branches, proved untrue to their high mission, the purpose of God that this race should be the bearers of a true spiritual revelation to the whole world was not thwarted. The ideal way of achieving this result, through the loyal obedience of the Hebrew people, was thwarted, but the divine purpose swept on to its fulfilment, as a mighty river in the times of its flood sweeps toward the sea around the sand bar that would stay its course, or carries it away.

Time and again, as one follows the unfolding of this tremendous drama, one feels the futility of hoping that the light that was in the Hebrew people through the revelation of Jehovah may not be extinguished. The fall of the northern kingdom removes, at a stroke, a strong support of human confidence. The destruction of Jerusalem apparently closes the whole story in complete overthrow and ruin. The results of disloyalty to Jehovah are illustrated on a vast and impressive scale, but the confidence of a few men that Jehovah would not permit His purpose of blessing the whole world through His Chosen People utterly to fail was triumphantly vindicated in the later history. The captivity itself proved to be the fire that purified, not the flame that destroyed. The exiles found that Jehovah ruled in Babylon as truly as in Jerusalem. "Jehovah of hosts, who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in wisdom" (Is. 28:29) is a constantly present force in history, and He controls the issues.

## CHAPTER XL.

### PROGRESSIVE DETERIORATION.

2 Ki. 25 : 22-26; Jer. chs. 40-44.

After the fall of Jerusalem the current of Hebrew history divides into two branches. The future of the exiles in Babylonia is almost entirely distinct from that of the survivors of the Hebrew state who remained in Judah. It is with the fortunes of the latter that we are now concerned.

The overwhelming calamities that had come upon Jerusalem, because of the national apostasy from Jehovah, did not result in weaning the survivors who remained in Judah from their idolatries, so that they returned to their allegiance to Jehovah. We do not owe the pure spiritual monotheism, which is the transcendent gift of Israel to the world, to the section of the Hebrews which remained in Judah; we owe it almost wholly to the exiles in Babylonia.

Indeed, the story of the survivors in Judah affords a vivid illustration of the tendency of evil to propagate itself in widening circles, and to overcome the forces that might tend to reformation and to the restoration of moral health. There is an evolution downward as well as upward, and many pages of human history illustrate the development of the forces of decay, dissolution and death. This is the case in the story of the Judean Hebrews. The events of the past taught them nothing. Those who hold that calamities and penalties are necessarilly remedial, and that men can be brought back to the right path by experiencing the results of their evil courses, find scant support for their theories in this epoch of Biblical history, or, for that matter, in many of the usual manifestations of human nature.

The narrative gives us several suggestions as to the process of this increasing deterioration. For one

thing, the Judean Hebrews found that the course of events was peculiarly unfavorable to the social unity and order which were the necessary conditions of a strong reformatory movement. We have a proverb that misfortunes never come singly. There is a reason for that saying. The misadventure or calamity that disturbs settled conditions affects larger relations than are at first apparent. In war, for example, the defeat of a nation not only changes its relation to its antagonist, but to other nations, who are alert to utilize its weakness for their own aggrandizement, and so one calamity draws others in its train. That was the case in Palestine. The neighboring provinces were eager to avail themselves of the weakness of Judah, and were glad to promote anarchy in that territory so that the fulfilment of their ambitions might be the easier. Nebuchadnezzar had appointed Gedaliah (Jer. 26:24; 2 Ki. 22:9), a trusty Hebrew noble who had advocated Jeremiah's policy of submission to Babylon, as governor of the Judean survivors, who probably greatly outnumbered those who were deported to Babylon. Gedaliah had succeeded in reducing the country to order, and excellent harvests had encouraged the people. At this juncture the king of Ammon found in Ishmael, a renegade Judean prince, a tool to his hand. Gedaliah was assassinated, and all those who had rallied about him were thrown into the utmost confusion. When we think that we can put a term to the sequences of wrong-doing, it is wholesome to reflect that even the terrific catastrophe of the fall of Jerusalem did not cut off and close the results of Israel's departure from Jehovah. It seems sometimes as if wrong-doing arrayed events themselves and the course of nature against the transgressor.

Another step in this process was the increasing indifference of the people to the prophet of Jehovah. After the assassination of Gedaliah a common impulse seized the people to find a refuge in Egypt. There were some strong reasons for this, especially as a

fresh deportation of Hebrews to Babylon seems to have taken place after the affront to Chaldean authority by the murder of the governor (Jer. 52:30). But Jeremiah, who had been suffered to leave the chain-gang of exiles, and had rejoined his countrymen in Judah, saw that, as in all the past, Egypt was a staff that pierced the hand of the one leaning upon it. He foretold that the reigning Pharaoh would fall into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar. He said that their true course was to remain in Palestine, loyal to the suzerainty of Chaldea. One would think that Jeremiah's devotion to the interests of the people, and the vindication events had given to his previous utterances, would have made him a trusted leader as the mouthpiece of Jehovah, but their own wisdom was better to the people than any word of Jehovah.

We may notice in passing that events completely justified the forecast of Jeremiah, and though a passage in Ezekiel indicates that the Egyptian Jews may have had a considerable part in the restoration of their people to Jerusalem (Ezek. 29:17-21), only a few of them became influential in the subsequent history of Palestine.

Another step may be seen in their blindness to the true cause of their calamities. A Chaldean soldier, looking at the course of events from a purely external point of view, described with precision the causes of the fall of Jerusalem: "And the captain of the guard took Jeremiah, and said unto him, Jehovah thy God pronounced this evil upon this place; and Jehovah hath brought it, and done according as he spake; because ye have sinned against Jehovah, and have not obeyed his voice, therefore this thing is come upon you" (Jer. 40:2, 3). This word of the Chaldean captain of the guard reminds one of the exclamation of the Roman centurion after the crucifixion of Jesus (Mt. 27:54). But when Jeremiah confronted the women who worshiped Ashtoreth with the fact of their apostasy from Jehovah as the cause of the nation's ca-

lamity, they replied: "Since we left off burning incense to the queen of heaven, and pouring out drink-offerings unto her, we have wanted all things, and have been consumed by the sword and by the famine" (Jer. 44:18). It is difficult to say how far such reasoning is sincere, and how far a pretext for self-excuse. But there can be no doubt that wrong-doing sometimes so blunts the moral perceptions that men lose the capacity of moral discrimination, and fail to distinguish between good and evil. This is the state that Jesus describes as beyond recovery (Mt. 12:24-31).

Taken as a whole, this Biblical record of the evolution of evil throws into salient relief the fact that sin contains in itself the means of its own punishment. On the one hand, it so arrays the sequences of events against itself, that the beginning of a sinful course is like the opening of waters. On the other hand, the gravest penalty of sin is the increasing disposition to sin—moral indifference and moral blindness.

## CHAPTER XLI.

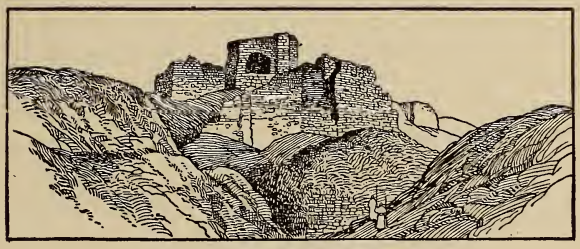
### THE EVOLUTION OF GOOD.

Jer. chs. 24, 29 ; Ezek. chs. 1-20

The company of ten thousand Hebrews, which made up Nebuchadnezzar's first deportation from Judah to Babylon (597 B. C.) comprised the choicest elements of the Hebrew State. From these exiles came the noble religious idealism and moral impulse that we associate with historic Judaism.

There are some indications that the group of Hebrews deported after the assassination of Gedaliah was practically enslaved (Ezek. 34 : 27). If that was so, it was due to the fact that Nebuchadnezzar must have been peculiarly exasperated by the murder of his lieutenant.

The first group of exiles, which had been carried to Babylon after the revolt of Jehoiakim, 597 B. C., en-



**Ruins on the Site of Babylon.**

joyed virtual self-government in one of the most desirable provinces of the empire. They appear to have adopted the counsel of Jeremiah (Jer. 29: 5-8), and to have set themselves to the development of their resources. Still, no pleasantness of material conditions could obliterate their longing for their ancestral home —the land of the great promise of Jehovah (Pss. 42, 43, 137), nor could it silence their restless inquiry for the

true interpretation of the disaster that had overtaken the city of the Holy One of Israel and the impending total loss of their place as a people among the nations of the earth.

We best appreciate the mission of the prophet Ezekiel when we realize that the main part of his message is addressed to the state of mind occasioned by this inquiry. As soon as the exiles recovered consciousness from the stunning effects of the blows dealt by Nebuchadnezzar, they asked what do these disasters mean? That Jehovah has withdrawn Himself from Israel (Lam. 5:20; Ezek. 8:12)? That the mission of Israel is a total failure?

Ezekiel's answer to such questions is the answer made by all the prophets. He says that Jehovah, who absolutely controls the forces of history, has suffered these things to come upon His people because they had been faithless to Him. These disasters are the results of sin. We can hardly imagine a more vivid picture of faithlessness to a great trust, of ingratitude, and of unresponsiveness to high privilege and an inspiring destiny than Ezekiel has given us in his famous sixteenth chapter. The delineation is overwhelming in its convincingness. Israel suffered because she had not been true to Jehovah, and all she suffered was deserved.

But Ezekiel does not stop here. He is no forensic expounder of the ways of God with men. He does not belong to "the hard church." He adds to his general view of the national disaster two thoughts which were a real contribution to the ethical and religious outlook of the race.

The first is that, though the sin of Israel has thwarted the divine purpose, it has not changed or defeated it. The nation has failed to realize Jehovah's ideal for it. He cannot do what He would have done. Still, through the overthrow, the disappointment and the suffering of Israel Jehovah would accomplish His purpose (Ezek. 20:42-44), and His worship would be

re-established in Jerusalem (Ezek. 16: 62). Amos and Isaiah had made a vast contribution to religious thought by their doctrine that Jehovah is Lord of the whole earth, and that all the forces which enter into human history are pliant to His will. Ezekiel advances beyond that. He is himself the greatest of the Hebrew preachers of repentance, and he dares affirm that Jehovah will succeed in making Israel fulfil her glorious mission because of the strength of His moral appeal to men. Perhaps there is not in all literature a more impressive forecast of the triumph of moral forces than the closing verses of Ezekiel's sixteenth chapter. We shall see in our further study how, after the final destruction of Jerusalem, Ezekiel developed this idea, throwing his whole soul into the effort to make it a reality to his countrymen.

The prophet carefully guards this great doctrine from abuse by his second contribution to religious thought. He deepens, expands and unfolds Isaiah's conception of "the remnant" by his enforcement of the principle of individualism, of personal responsibility. He utterly repudiates the current proverb: "The fathers have eaten sour grapes; and the children's teeth are set on edge." Against the perverted doctrine of heredity and the solidarity of the family, race or nation, he utters his message of individualism: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die; the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son" (Ezek. 18: 20). Does any one say that Jehovah's accomplishment of His purpose through Israel means that He will relax moral requirements, and be careless of righteousness? No, says Ezekiel, it means that the relationship of the individual to Jehovah is the supreme thing, and that out of individuals who serve Jehovah He will reconstruct the spiritual Israel which shall inherit the promises, and fulfil the divine mission.

In the light of this doctrine the significance of the captivity began to appear. On the one hand it was the

penalty for the national apostacy; on the other hand, it was a part of the moral appeal and discipline which were to winnow and purify the spiritual Israel.

Did Ezekiel's interpretation bring light and comfort to the exiled Hebrews? We may be sure that it did so. We shall see how after Jerusalem had been destroyed, these truths became the solace and the confidence of the people. Indeed, it may be said that the message of Ezekiel provided the rational basis for the emergence of the Jewish church from the Jewish state, and prepared the way for what Erasmus called the distinctively Christian conceptions of the inwardness of religion and of the worth of a human personality.

**The Prophet Ezekiel.**

From the Copley Print of Sargent's "Frieze of the Prophets," in the Boston Public Library. (Copyright, 1898, by Curtis and Cameron.)

## CHAPTER XLII.

### THE TRANSCENDENT OPTIMISM.

Ezek. chs. 33-37.

We have seen that before the fall of Jerusalem Ezekiel had preached his two great doctrines that the relationship of the individual to Jehovah is the supremely important thing, and that moral forces are destined to triumph. After the complete destruction of Jerusalem and the temple his message was put to the severest test. The burden of the prophecy of Isaiah had been the inviolability of Jerusalem. His confidence had been gloriously vindicated in his own day, but now it had been disproved. This total overthrow of Jewish expectations provoked among the exiles in Babylon two different moods. Some took the attitude of defiant skepticism. It seemed to them as if Jehovah had failed to keep His promises, and they inferred that either He was less powerful or less trustworthy than they had supposed. Others, without going into speculation, simply relapsed into perplexed and sullen submission to the inevitable. They did not know what to think, and so they stopped thinking, and were dumb before the stubborn and dreadful facts. These attitudes of the exiles, in the face of their overwhelming disappointment, are strikingly similar to those adopted by men everywhere when they are overtaken by calamity. Christian pastors come to expect that they will find those who lack a vital faith in one of these moods, when misfortune or bereavement enters their homes.

But there is a third attitude toward calamity which was that of the prophet Ezekiel. Up to the fall of Jerusalem he had denounced the disloyalty to Jehovah, which was the real cause of the national overthrow, and had called the people to repentance. After that event, with remarkable insight into the workings of

human nature, he radically changed the tone of his preaching. He saw that the event had enforced his previous message in a more poignant way than any possible words of his could do, and so he used the doctrines which had been so effective for rebuke, as the basis for a sublime confidence in the victorious outcome of these fearful calamities for the spiritual Israel of the future. He did not hold that Jehovah would bring this about irrespective of the moral character of Israel. He did not fall into the habitual error of shallow optimists that things would come out all right somehow, even to those who are disloyal to God. The ground of his confidence was a splendid faith in the responsiveness of the individual soul to a moral appeal, and his magnificent appreciation of the wealth of moral forces in the character of Jehovah to make His appeal effective.

Ezekiel did not leave the people in doubt as to the moral forces upon which he relied. First of all he was confident that the very calamities from which they suffered would lead them to review the past dealings of Jehovah with them. Such a review would convince them that the real cause of every calamity that had come upon them was not the weakness, the indifference or vindictiveness of Jehovah but their own disloyalty to Him (Ezek. 36:16-19). It is true that He has not been willing to secure the material welfare of His people at every cost. He has not been willing to condone unrighteousness. The supreme consideration with Him has not been their happiness but their holiness, and then the happiness which is the result and flower of righteousness. We can almost imagine Ezekiel as saying: What man of you would take satisfaction in learning that his child was happy in a life of shame? Deep down in your own heart is a recognition of the primacy of righteousness. The truth is that the attitude of Jehovah toward you has been absolutely controlled by love, and disloyalty to Him has assumed the peculiarly heinous form of ingratitude.

In the second place Ezekiel declares that henceforth Jehovah will assume a much more intimate relationship to loyal hearts than heretofore. Israel has suffered not a little from negligent and selfish shepherds (Ezek. 34:1-10). Henceforth Jehovah Himself will be the Shepherd of Israel: "I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord Jehovah. I will seek that which was lost, and will bring back that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick" (Ezek. 34:15, 16). This beautiful picture reminds us not only of the twenty-third Psalm, but of our Lord's representation of Himself as the Good Shepherd (Jo. 10 : 14).

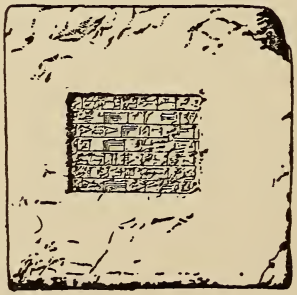
In the third place Ezekiel seems to contemplate a new spiritual energy going forth from Jehovah to break down the stubborn disloyalty of Israel and to bestow on them a new spirit causing them to keep His law in a truly filial spirit. "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep mine ordinances, and do them" (Ezek. 36 : 26, 27; compare 6 : 9; 11 : 19; 16 : 63; 20 : 43; 37 : 14; 39 : 28). May we not say that we have in these great passages a clear foreshadowing of Jesus' doctrine of the Holy Spirit? Ezekiel taught the irresistible grace of God, not irresistible as a physical force, but as a moral appeal, addressed to human hearts fashioned by their original constitution to respond to such appeals.

The prophet makes the triumph of Jehovah's appeal clearer by reference to two considerations. First, it is for His own sake, as well as for the sake of Israel that His people must be redeemed and made glorious in the earth. The complaint of Israel is well grounded that the disasters that had overtaken the nation had caused the name of Jehovah to be profaned in the

earth, as if He were not able to care for His own (Ezek. 36:20). The reconstituted Israel will be the glorious vindication of Jehovah. It will not simply manifest His power, but His righteousness, for it will show that the calamities of Israel were not due to the weakness of Jehovah, but to the primacy of holiness in His character (Ezek. 36:36; 37:28).

Still further Ezekiel reminds the exiles that it is vain for man to put limits to the resources of Jehovah. The redemption and re-establishment of Israel may appear hopeless to the eye of human wisdom, but Jehovah can re-people with living men the valley of dry bones (Ezek. 37:1-14).

If the exiles in Babylon were to take any hopeful view of their future it must be on the basis of faith in Jehovah. Ezekiel pointed out the way to such confidence. And the magnificent Hebrew optimist based his hopes upon considerations that appeal to humanity to-day with all their original force.



**Brick from Babylon, Stamped with Nebuchadnezzar's Name.**

Nebuchadnezzar was a great builder, and many bricks bearing his name are found among the ruins of Babylon.

## CHAPTER XLIII.

### THE BLESSING TO MANKIND.

Is. chs. 40-55.

The large majority of Biblical scholars attribute the part of the book of Isaiah which begins with the fortieth chapter to a prophet who lived in Babylon near the close of the exile. A full century and a half separates this writer from the statesman-prophet of the reign of Hezekiah.

About thirty years after the fall of Jerusalem the hearts of the exiles in Babylon were stirred by the prophetic announcement, through the lips of Isaiah of Babylon, that the period of captivity was drawing to a close. We may imagine the consternation and the joy with which the exiles heard such words as these from an accredited prophet of Jehovah: "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem; and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she hath received of Jehovah's hand double for all her sins" (Is. 40 : 1, 2).

Isaiah did not seek to inspire this confidence as to the future of the exiles by the bare assertion of the fact. He supported his word by considerations of great weight.

In the first place, he boldly advanced the doctrine that, in the mercy of Jehovah, there was a limit to the penalties of Israel's transgressions. Her period of trouble is ended. She has received of Jehovah's hand the full measure of punishment. Her suffering has tended to produce that penitent mind which makes it possible for Jehovah to pardon her iniquity. It was no new teaching that Jehovah pardons iniquity. Over against the sternest warnings of the prophets, and the direst predictions of calamities there was set the prospect of recovery and blessedness, when Israel turned

back to God. This light rested even on the prophecy of Amos (9:11-15). And those who were familiar with the Psalms could not fail to realize how intimately this truth was associated with the substance of the revelation of Jehovah. The hearts of the exiles must have leaped with joy when Isaiah told them that God had pardoned them. It would not have been possible for them to believe the rest of his message without that assurance, any more than it is possible for us to-day to believe that God has any good thing in store for us so long as we are conscious of being unreconciled to Him, while the sense of fellowship with God carries with it the pledge of every blessing (Mt. 6:33; Rom. 8:32).

In the second place, Isaiah supported his announcement by summoning them to reflect that the Lord of the whole earth, who has chosen Israel for His purposes, will bless the whole earth (mankind) through Israel. The conception that Jehovah is the Lord of the whole earth is the teaching of all the prophets from the time of Amos. Isaiah of Jerusalem and Jeremiah had declared that every force that enters into the history of man is subject to the will of Jehovah. He can use the nations to protect or to chastise Israel, as He chooses. Ezekiel expanded the doctrine in teaching that Jehovah would succeed in His purpose with Israel because of the omnipotence of His moral appeal.

Isaiah of Babylon advanced even beyond this. Nothing can excel the eloquence and power of his exposition of the doctrine of Amos and of Ezekiel (Is. 40:12-31). But he drew from it the original and majestic inference that the Lord of the whole earth cares for all mankind, and since He has chosen Israel for the fulfilment of His purpose, it cannot be that He will leave Israel in disgrace and exile. All the ends of the earth are to be saved by Jehovah. Unto Him every knee shall bow in homage and every tongue shall swear allegiance. In the fulfilment of this vast purpose Israel is to have her place of glory (Is. 45:21-25).

Putting it in another way, the earlier prophets applied their conception of the omnipotence of Jehovah almost wholly to the fortunes of Israel. Jehovah would protect or chastise Israel according to His righteous will. Isaiah of Babylon applied his conception of the omnipotence of Jehovah to the whole world, to the fortunes of the race. He preached what Origen called "the Gospel of creation." He taught, to quote the noble sentence of Bishop Westcott, that "the creation of the world is the pledge of the redemption of the world." Israel did not exist for herself alone, but for mankind, and hence Israel, as the Chosen People of Jehovah, is to have her glorious place in the work of blessing mankind. Now that she has been purged of her transgression, the time of her deliverance from Babylon must be near that she may fulfil her part in this too long delayed work.

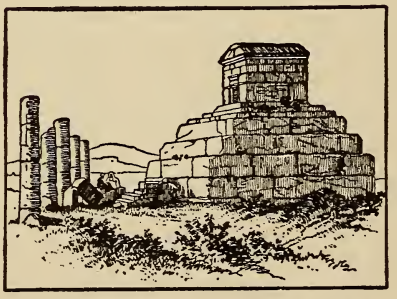
In the third place, Isaiah confirmed his message of comfort by calling the attention of the exiles to the fact that there were indications in the actual historical situation that the end of the Babylonian dominion was approaching, and with it the time of their deliverance.

Cyrus, King of Persia.

From a bas-relief among the ruins of ancient Pasargadæ, Cyrus' royal residence. The inscription at the top, now broken off, read: "I am Cyrus, the King, the Achæmenian."

Nebuchadnezzar had died in 561 B. C. He left no worthy successor. A series of weak or infant kings removed by assassination had disorganized the realm. In the meantime an obscure Persian prince was rapidly achieving an international position of first-rate importance. He had conquered Astyages, king of Ecbatana and Crœsus, the famous wealthy king of Lydia. Thus he had made himself master of Asia Minor, as well as

of the territory northeast of Babylonia. Isaiah had only to connect the appearance of this world-conqueror with his teachings as to the character and power of Jehovah to find in the historic movement of his own day ample room for believing that the Babylonian oppression was doomed. Cyrus is a minister of God to fulfil His purpose. And yet we are to remember that while Cyrus in an inscription speaks of himself as "beloved of Bel and Nebo," Isaiah refers to these very gods in utmost scorn as so much dead weight, baggage for the backs of beasts (Is. 46: 1-10; comp. 44: 12-17). It was not because Cyrus loved Jehovah or was consciously serving Him that he was to perform his great work, but simply because Jehovah was God of the whole earth and chose to use this tool. The very fact that Cyrus was such a tool, taken in connection with Israel's pardon, and Jehovah's purpose to bless mankind through Israel, strengthened confidence in Isaiah's great message of comfort.



Tomb of Cyrus, near Pasargadæ, Persia.

## CHAPTER XLIV.

### THE IDEAL OF SERVICE.

**The "Servant" passages in Isaiah, chs. 40-55.**

We have seen that Isaiah of Babylon drew an original and majestic inference from the omnipotence of Jehovah. He saw that the Lord of the whole earth cared for all mankind, and had a high and large purpose for the race. Therefore, the special revelation and guidance and protection He had given to Israel were not for the sake of Israel only, they were to be connected with His purpose for mankind. Hence, the Hebrew nation would not fulfil its mission by simply becoming prosperous, united and devoted to the service of Jehovah. It could only realize its true destiny in becoming the means and the channel of spiritual blessing to the whole world. Israel is to be a light to the Gentiles, that she may be the salvation of Jehovah to the ends of the earth (Is. 49:6). But this great doctrine of Isaiah is after all involved in the original call of Abraham, when he was told that Jehovah's purpose was not simply to make of him a great nation, but in him to bless all the families of the earth (Gen. 12:2, 3). The chord that sounds so clearly in Isaiah was struck at the very beginning of the symphony.

From this point of view nothing could be more natural than that Isaiah should draw a picture of the kind of nation Israel must be, and the kind of service she must render in order to accomplish this high mission to mankind. These descriptions constitute the famous "Servant" passages of Isaiah. They are inserted like a vignette in the text of a printed page, or, to change the figure, when we hold up the page to the light we see beneath the text the water line of a human face. It is the face of the ideal Servant of Jehovah. We may call it a personification of Israel when she is

absolutely loyal to her high vocation, but the face that gleams from the page is something more than that. It is the face of one who renders the highest conceivable service to mankind in the noblest ways.

What would such a person be in character, in method, and in purpose? Did ever a thinker confront a more difficult question? The temptation to answer it in the terms of some beneficent world conqueror like Cyrus, who was just then looming so large on the horizon of world politics, must have been almost irresistible. Isaiah vindicates his superb prophetic insight, by turning away from every ideal of human beneficence that had occurred to men, and drawing, with absolute sureness of touch, the strong, sympathetic face, unattractive to any eye without spiritual insight, of one who so absolutely identifies himself with the lot of those whom he would bless that he suffers even to death on their behalf, and this while he is misunderstood, unappreciated and cruelly persecuted by the very persons whom he is seeking to bless. This, said Isaiah, is the face of one who will render mankind the highest service in the noblest ways. This is the ideal "Servant of Jehovah."

Now it is not strange that there should have been many partial correspondences with this description. Isaiah had such a clear insight into the nature of moral service to mankind, and into the conditions under which it could be rendered that every man who has actually given spiritual help to others has in some small way fulfilled the prophecy. But we have only to turn to the New Testament to see its complete and glorious realization in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Leaving out of account the correspondences in details between the description of the Servant and Jesus Christ, which are very wonderful, the character, the attitude, the method, and the purpose of Jesus match the portrait drawn by Isaiah as the planet Neptune matched the prophecies of Le Verrier and Adams.

Did Isaiah across the vast gulf of five centuries and

a half see God's revelation of Himself to man in the person of His Son? At least this much is certain: Isaiah so clearly discerned the conditions of true spiritual service that when Jesus came He naturally and inevitably conformed to them, and so corresponded to the description Isaiah had given.

> "In His harmonious fulness wrought
> Who gathers in one sheaf complete
> The scattered blades of God's sown wheat."
> —Whittier: Miriam.

The question then comes, did Isaiah believe that this ideal Servant of Jehovah would actually appear? Taking his prophecies in their whole sweep and compass it seems to be clear that it was this precise confidence which was the ground of all his bright expectations for Israel and for the human race.

The more we meditate upon this the more wonderful it will appear that more than five centuries before our era Isaiah should have drawn a recognizable portrait of Jesus Christ. The word "recognizable" is not strong enough, for to-day when on Good Friday we seek to put before our minds a clear and moving representation of the crowning work of the Redeemer, we read the fifty-third chapter of the prophecy of Isaiah.

## CHAPTER XLV.

### GOD'S TEMPORAL PROVIDENCE.

**Ezra chs. 1-3.**

The conquest of Babylon by Cyrus naturally made some change in the attitude of Chaldea towards its tributary provinces. Still we should hardly have supposed that Cyrus would completely reverse the policy of the great over-lord of Western Asia. Yet that is precisely what he did. The Babylonian kings sought to crush conquered states into submission so that every opportunity and power for insurrection might be taken away. Cyrus, on the other hand, believed that the true way to deal with subject peoples was to give them all the liberty they could possibly use. He encouraged them to revive their national institutions and forms of worship, and made rather extensive provisions for the migration of those who wished to return to their ancestral homes. Undoubtedly there were specific as well as general considerations behind this policy. He himself had conquered Babylon largely through the aid of the disaffected peoples who had been brought into the home kingdom. He saw the wisdom of pacifying Babylonia, if his rule was to have any stable basis.

In pursuance of this policy, in the first year of his reign, Cyrus issued his famous edict (Ezra 1:2-4). The language seems at first to indicate that Cyrus had become a monotheist, worshiping Jehovah alone: "All the kingdoms of the earth hath Jehovah, the God of heaven, given me; and he hath charged me to build him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah." The testimony of the monuments is to the effect that Cyrus was what Max Muller called a "Henotheist," that is to say, he admitted the existence of many gods, while at the same time, for political or geographical reasons, he worshiped the god which seemed best on that oc-

casion. In Jerusalem he would worship Jehovah. On one of his cylinders Cyrus explicitly states that he and his son Cambyses are worshipers of Marduk, Bel and Nebo, the gods of Babylon. There is no necessary inconsistency between this statement and the language of the edict, which naturally is couched in a form to identify him as closely as possible with his Jewish subjects.

It was because of this permission and encouragement on the part of the king that we find in these opening chapters of the book of Ezra a record of the beginning of the exodus from Babylonia, and the reestablishment of Jerusalem as the Hebrew capital. We must not imagine that the whole race emigrated to Jerusalem. On the contrary, many of the Jews who had escaped to Egypt, after the murder of Gedaliah, appear to have remained there. And we know that a strong contingent of the Hebrews, who had attained wealth and position in Babylon, never returned, though many of them were in hearty sympathy with the enterprise of rebuilding Jerusalem, and contributed to it.

The outstanding fact that impresses the modern reader of this narrative, to whom many of the details are necessarily obscure, is that God by His providence was fulfilling the word of the prophets that the fall of Jerusalem was not the end of the Hebrew people in Palestine, that Jerusalem and the temple should rise again, and Jehovah be worshiped on the site of the old shrine. The historian goes so far as to say that Cyrus made this proclamation "that the word of Jehovah by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished" (Ezra 1:1). Not that Cyrus knew of this prophecy and was consciously fulfilling it, but that the providence of God controlled events so that it should be certainly fulfilled.

We are continually forecasting the future on the basis of our shrewd estimate of probabilities, in which we give a higher regard to physical than to moral

law. We do not see how a certain end can be accomplished, though the failure to attain it would violate a great moral principle, rewarding iniquity, and setting the most depraved in the highest places. We are often tempted to say: "What doth God know? Can he judge through the thick darkness?" (Job 22:13.) It was the problem that confounded the author of the seventy-third psalm, and he was led back to faith, when, in the sanctuary, the truth of God's providence found a response in his heart. We do not have such forecasts of the future as Israel had, but the way those anticipations were fulfilled indicates the ultimate triumph of the great moral truths of revelation.

Still further, these accomplishments were for the most part wrought by the simple providence of God, into which the miraculous did not enter. If we except the possible divine suggestion to Cyrus that he should issue his edict about the Jews—which is not in the least necessary, indeed is hardly reconcilable with the general tenor of the narrative—there is not a hint of the miraculous. The end was wrought out through what Canon Mozley calls "God's temporal providence." There is a place for miracles in the Christian revelation, but we must not overlook the great truth that the laws of nature and the forces that enter into human history are under God's control. The stormy winds and Cyrus, the world-conqueror, fulfil His word.

When Luther was at Coburg, waiting impatiently the outcome of the Diet of Augsburg, he wrote to his friend the Electoral Chancellor Bruck: "I have lately witnessed two miracles, as I was looking out of the window: the first was the beautiful vault of heaven with the stars supported by no pillars, and yet standing; the other was thick, dark clouds floating along without basis to rest upon, or any vessel in which they were contained; and then after, with solemn visage, they had saluted the heavens and fled away, burst out the brilliant rainbow, which sustained the heavy mass

of water upon its weak, transparent roof." Luther, like all who have caught the significance of the Hebrew and Christian revelations, saw the divine in the workings of all law, in the orderly and familiar as truly as in the unusual and the startling.

## CHAPTER XLVI.

### CONSCIENTIOUS DEVOTION REWARDED

Ezra chs. 4–6; Haggai.

The importance of the temple to the life of Israel can hardly be overestimated. When the temple was destroyed it seemed as if the inner principle of coherence in the political, social and religious institutions of the nation had been annihilated. Hence the first step toward the actual re-establishment of the national existence in its ancient seat was the rebuilding of the temple.

Scholars differ as to whether the initiation of this enterprise was due to a revival of religious interest and of national feeling among the descendants of the people who had been left in the land at the time of the Babylonian captivity, or to the zeal of the contingent of Babylonian Hebrews who had returned to Jerusalem under the authorization of the edict of Cyrus. Presumably there is truth in both representations. Haggai probably was a native of Jerusalem, who had shared the fortunes of the people that had remained in Judah; while Zechariah was a native of Babylon, whose prophecies link on to those of Haggai, and supplement them. The revival among the Palestinian Hebrews, and the zeal of their Babylonian brethren co-operated to initiate this national work.

Head of Haggai.

From the Copley Print of Sargent's "Frieze of the Prophet's," in the Boston Public Library. (Copyright, 1898, by Curtis and Cameron.)

There are three phases of the progress of this enterprise which deserve special consideration. One was the refusal on the part of the Jews at Jerusalem of the offer of Samaritan help (Ezra 4:1-3). This may easily be represented as churlish bigotry on the part of the Hebrews. In modern phrase it might be said that Samaritan resources, even if "tainted," in the opinion of pious Hebrews, would go just as far as similar resources coming from Palestinian or Babylonian Jews in quarrying stones or in felling lumber for the temple. If the Hebrews were so zealous about the good work of building the house of Jehovah, was it not the dictate of simple common-sense to accept aid from any source, and not to be over-zealous in scrutinizing the character of the givers? The principle upon which the builders of the temple acted, however, is sufficiently clear. They saw that the acceptance of this aid meant the admission of the half pagan Samaritans to some influence in the worship of Jehovah.

And the bitter experience of the captivity taught those who remained in Judah and those who were deported to Chaldea that the worship of Jehovah could not be combined with that of pagan deities. That experiment had been tried over and over again. The remnant of Judah was now thoroughly monotheistic, and it had no heart for traveling again the weary road of the old experiment. Better by far that the temple should be built by its own resources, even at the cost of exhausting sacrifice; better even that the temple should remain unbuilt, than that the taint of the old polytheism should be introduced into the worship of Jehovah through the influence the Samaritans might claim on the strength of their contributions.

A second important feature of the situation was that after the Jews had assumed this attitude toward the Samaritans they had to take the consequences of it. They had turned would-be friends into implacable enemies, whose plots with the central government brought

the whole work to a standstill (Ezra ch. 5). Furthermore, it seemed as if everything went wrong with them. There was a succession of poor harvests accompanied by mildew and hail (Hag. 1:11; 2:17). This closely parallels common human experience. Men frequently have to pay the full cost of pursuing a course dictated by conscientious motives, and it often seems as if a combination of events made the way of righteousness as difficult as possible. Still we must remember that if the rewards of well-doing were invariable and immediate, the heroic quality in a high moral decision would be eliminated. Heroism is impossible without taking serious risks.

But the chapter of accidents is not continuously against those who follow the dictates of a high moral sense. It was not in this case. The patience of the temple builders was tried, and for a time they had to desist from their work, but a series of events wholly unforeseen gave them a rare opportunity. The unsettled condition of the Persian empire in the interval between the death of Cyrus (530 B. C.) and the reorganization of the realm under Darius (521 B. C.) diverted the attention of the central government from what was going on in Palestine. This was the opportunity which Haggai and Zechariah seized to inspire the Hebrews of Jerusalem to resume the work and push it on with vigor, and the protest of the Samaritans resulted in the discovery of the old edict of Cyrus, which convinced Darius that it was good policy to permit the Jews to build their temple, and to assist them substantially in their undertaking.

Thus it came about that, by reason of the noble resolution of the Hebrews, matched and assisted by a series of events in which the providence of God is clearly seen, the temple was completed (516 B. C.), without Samaritan help, and in spite of Samaritan hostility, and unencumbered with any explicit or implicit recognition of any worship but that of Jehovah, God of Israel. The experience of the Hebrews in building

this temple is a striking illustration of the fact that God honors the efforts of those who honor Him. The author of the sixteenth psalm gave this truth sublime spiritual expression:

"I have set Jehovah always before me:
Because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved."

**Impression of a Seal of Darius.**

The trilingual inscription reads, "I am Darius, the great king."

## CHAPTER XLVII.

### HUMAN ABILITY CONSECRATED TO GOD.

Neh. chs. 1-6; 12 : 31-43.

It is a unique feature of the ancient Hebrew records that they represent the nation as being delivered in the crises of its history through the agency of some strong personality, whose work and influence were decisive. Can any other people furnish such a portrait gallery of able, masterful men as the countenances that look out upon us from the pages of the Old Testament? Sargent's representation of the prophets only utilizes a part of the suggestions of Hebrew history.

Among these men of force and character Nehemiah holds an honorable place. Several features of his career are outstanding.

One is that he represents that considerable group of Hebrews scattered throughout Western Asia, who though they rose to high place in the Babylonian and Persian empires, never lost sight of the welfare of the home of their race, and of the city of the Holy One of Israel. These men were ready to subordinate their private interests to the dictates of an enlightened patriotism. To such a man as Nehemiah his position at court must have made his life extremely comfortable. He had risen about as high in the political world as was possible for a subject. He enjoyed frequent opportunities for private access to the sovereign with all that that implies. His whole life was cast in those conditions which carry with them luxury, consideration and influence. And yet Nehemiah was so profoundly affected by the news of the condition of his brethren in Jerusalem that he forgot his own concerns. A heavy burden lay upon his heart. He besought Jehovah in a fervent prayer (Neh. 1:4-11), and for many weary weeks watched for a favorable opportunity to approach the king. And when the opportunity came and his re-

quest was heeded, he was glad to leave the happy conditions of life at court, and lead an expedition that involved much hardship and many trying experiences to promote the welfare of the Hebrews at Jerusalem.

Sometimes even good men are tempted to judge their fellows by class labels, and to assume that because many of the rich and highly placed are selfish, arrogant and unsympathetic, these are the characteristics of them all. Whereas, the fact is, that a poor man in a mean place may have these very qualities intensely developed, and a man of great resources in an exalted place may be generous, humble, and full of fellow feeling. We must not attribute the characteristic vices of the great or of the lowly to every member of their respective classes. Much of the bitterness, rancor, and hatred between classes would vanish if men generally would admit and act upon such a thoroughly substantiated truth. George Washington was the richest man of his time in the American colonies, Coligni stood upon the steps of the throne, Sir Harry Vane found any political career open to him, Nehemiah was one of the most exalted men of his age. And yet these typical, representative men did not hesitate in the least to subordinate every personal consideration to a true patriotism. The hope of a true Christian civilization is that this spirit of devotion to the general welfare may prevail among rich and poor, exalted and lowly alike.

The career of Nehemiah also illustrates how human abilities of the first order may promote the purposes of God. No one can read these chapters understandingly without being impressed with the fact that Nehemiah belonged to the small class of men who rise to the top anywhere. There is a good deal of egotism about him. He uses the first personal pronoun with striking frequency, but, after making every allowance for this, he is emphatically a man who is master of the situation. He knows how to deal with the king, and he knows how to deal with a disorganized, suspicious populace torn by class hatreds. He can fan enthusiasm by a sound

appeal to true patriotic sentiments (Neh. 2:17,18). He can organize a difficult engineering task with the utmost efficiency (Neh. ch. 3), and when occasion requires he can display the qualities of a first-class general (Neh. 4:13-23). He can be trustful where confidence is deserved (Neh. 2:12), and exceedingly wary where his knowledge of human nature makes him suspicious (Neh. 6:3-14). Altogether Nehemiah is the sort of man for whom the world is always looking—sagacious, masterful, enterprising, courageous. If Nehemiah were living to-day, no matter where, in Germany, England, India or America, the world would hear of him, and acknowledge his capacity. In Egypt he would do with equal success the work of Lord Cromer; in Sarawak the work of Rajah Brooke; in China the work of Sir Robert Hart.

It is easy to misinterpret Paul's declaration that not many wise and not many mighty are called. It is true that God is not dependent upon the wisdom or resources of men, but it is also true that God does His mightiest work through human capacity sanctified and consecrated to His use. One of the first duties of a Christian man is to make the most of himself—if he is a business man, to make all the money he can honorably; if he is a professional man, to attain the utmost eminence in his calling; to be a man among men, and then to take all that he has won of fame, or position, or influence or wealth and devote it to promoting the interests of the kingdom of God. That is exactly what Nehemiah did.

## CHAPTER XLVIII.

### THE LAW OF THE LORD.

**Ezra chs. 9, 10; Neh. chs. 8, 9, 13.**

The captivity proved to be the discipline that fitted Israel to render the largest spiritual service to the world. The exiles in Babylonia attained a purity and intensity of religious life which they had never gained in Palestine. In the midst of a powerful and highly developed civilization they came to new appreciation of the significance of their own history. Their national traditions became unspeakably precious to them, and they took great pains to preserve the purity of their race, and to live more strictly than they had ever done in Palestine according to the requirements of their law. Of course it cannot be maintained that these were the characteristics of the whole body of the exiles. Many of them probably were weaned from their home city and lost the racial spirit, but the virile, dominant elements in the Hebrew contingent in Babylonia loved Jerusalem passionately, and came to a deeper appreciation of the revelation of Jehovah. Even those who for one reason or another did not join in any of the expeditions back to Jerusalem made large money contributions toward the upbuilding of the temple and the city, and followed the fortunes of these enterprises with the liveliest interest.

We may safely leave at one side the curious and perplexing tangle of the Nehemiah-Ezra chronology, and fasten our attention upon the well-ascertained features of the whole situation.

Whatever our theory as to the law Ezra brought to Jerusalem from Babylonia—whether, according to older scholars and the general tradition, it was the Pentateuch, as we now have it, or, according to many modern scholars, it was the so-called Priestly Code (Ex. chs. 25-31; 34: 29-40; ch. 38, and the books of Leviti-

cus and Numbers), the facts remain that much that Ezra taught was as old as the entrance of the Israelites into Canaan, and much was new. For example, the influence of Ezekiel, a recent prophet, is very marked in the attitude and requirements of Ezra. According to any possible view, therefore, the law of Ezra was the law of Moses, expanded, developed and interpreted, especially on the side of ritual, by Ezekiel. The law of Ezra also had its firm roots in the past, and it commended itself to the Palestinian Jews, who had been cut off largely from the Babylonian development, as the expression of the authoritative will of Jehovah. They would not have yielded to it if it had been, to any considerable extent, unfamiliar.

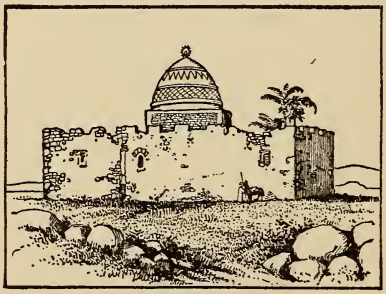
One of the best things in the life and character of the Hebrews was their readiness to respond to the law when it was fairly and impressively brought before them. They could easily enough forget it or disobey it, but when they were confronted with it they acknowledged its authority and repented. The great reforms under Samuel and Josiah were in response to expositions of the law. The course of Israel resembles the way of a child who is often thoughtless and disobedient, but easily becomes penitent when its better nature is touched. The response of the great assembly to Ezra's promulgation of the law indicates that in spite of the gross infidelities of Israel to Jehovah, there was something radically sound and wholesome in the old stock. When we are inclined to pass sweeping judgments upon the transgressions of Israel we do well to remember that there was always something worthy in this people, and that this something was the very best of its kind in the world.

The narrative also suggests the vast cost of some reforms. Ezra and Nehemiah both saw that only the most thorough isolation would prevent Israel from being lost in the surrounding nations. Hence alien marriages must be forbidden; the institution of the Sabbath must be honored and everything that marked

the distinction of the Jews from other peoples must be emphasized. The peril of mixed marriages appealed with great force to both reformers. Many of the Palestinian Jews had married Moabite or Ammonite women. The children were speaking a corrupt patois. It was evident that the purity of race and religion was most seriously threatened. It was a drastic, cruel thing to demand that these Hebrews should put away beloved wives and separate themselves from dear children in the interest of the future of the whole people, or else forfeit their share in the life of Israel. And yet, impartially surveying the whole situation, can we suggest any other course that would serve the end in view? The ideal treatment of the situation presents a vexatious problem to the most skilful casuist. This sacrifice was one of those enormous costs that are often involved in any advance in civilization and religion. It is not a pleasant thing to think of, and the distressing feature of the situation is that a large share of the burden and suffering must have fallen on wives as loyal as Ruth the Moabitess, and upon innocent children.

Still further, the narrative indicates the importance of the ritual side of religion. Whatever our view as to the sources of the law Ezra promulgated, no historian can doubt that the result of his work was to give a powerful impulse to the development of the ritual, formal aspect of religion. Indeed, the Pharisees represented the extreme results of the impulse that came from Ezra. The message of the great prophets that Jehovah requires obedience and not sacrifice, was not lost, but it was obscured. Still, though the fine balance that Jesus inculcated was disturbed (Mt. 23: 23), let us not assume too rashly that the whole movement was a mistake. For is it not just this institutional, ritual phase of religion which conserves, impresses, and transmits spiritual truth? A prophet is better than an institution, but the race of prophets is not continuous, and the prophet may put his spirit in-

to an institution and thus perpetuate his life. There were few Ezras or Nehemiahs in the subsequent life of Israel, and no Isaiahs, Ezekiels or Jeremiahs. Of course the scroll of the law preserved their messages, but it is very easy, even in these days of the printing-press, to overestimate the influence of books upon the masses of men. A ritual, an institution that symbolizes great truths, and creates an atmosphere congenial to them, is, next to the heart and voice of the prophet, the great instrumentality for impressing those truths. The coherence and vitality of Israel's later witness to the one God, whose character was holiness, largely grew out of the institutional work of Ezra. We do well not to think lightly of the formal, ritual side of religion, of church-going, of public worship, of the whole institutional life in which religion finds expression.



The Reputed Tomb of Ezra in Persia.

## CHAPTER XLIX.

### THE INSOLUBLE PROBLEM.

**Pss. 74, 79, 126; Is. 63:7—64:12; 66:8.**

The problem that confronted the Jews during the last part of the Persian dominion was the problem of the book of Job.

The exiles who had returned from Babylonia to Jerusalem, under Ezra and Nehemiah, were simply the advance guard of many such companies that flocked not only from Babylonia but from all the countries into which the Jews had been scattered after the fall of Jerusalem. The attraction was the stable and happy state which had been built up by the two great reformers under the mild overlordship of Persia. The favorable international conditions, and the determination of the leaders to admit no one into the body politic who did not conform to the strict ceremonial requirements of the Ezra-Nehemiah law, created a homogeneous community, actuated by a singular unity of purpose. If one were to select the single period in the whole history of the Hebrews in which human life was happiest, and in which the chosen people approached most nearly to their religious ideal, he would be apt to mention the first half of the fourth century before Christ, or, to be exact, the reign of Artaxerxes II (405-358 B. C.). A somewhat later poet, recalling this happy era, sang:

"When Jehovah brought back those that returned to Zion,
We were like unto them that dream.
Then was our mouth filled with laughter,
And our tongue with singing:
Then said they among the nations,
Jehovah hath done great things for them.
Jehovah hath done great things for us,
Whereof we are glad."

Ps. 126 : 1-3.

The successor of Artaxerxes II, his younger son

Ochus, proved to be almost as able and energetic as Darius I, and by far the most cruel sovereign of the Persian line. The defeat of Ochus by the king of Egypt, Nectanebus, led to an extensive revolt against the suzerainty of Persia throughout the whole of Syria; in which, from scattered notices in Josephus, we are led to infer that the Hebrew state, that had come to extend from a point near Hebron on the south to the neighborhood of Joppa on the northwest, was led to join. Probably the Syrian coalition was too strong for Jerusalem to resist. It was compelled to unite with it, or be crushed by it.

The other possible version of the history is that the prosperity of Jerusalem aroused in the hearts of the Hebrews their old ambition for extended conquest. But whatever the precise reason that led Jerusalem to array itself against Persia, it shared in the vengeance that Ochus visited upon all Syria. The passage Is. 63:7—64:12 apparently refers to this epoch, while the seventy-fourth and seventy-ninth psalms bring the incidents of the capture of Jerusalem and the feelings of the people before us with almost photographic fidelity.

"O God, why hast thou cast us off for ever?
Why doth thine anger smoke against the sheep of thy pasture?"
Ps. 74 : 1, 2.

The psalmist sees the ruthless Persian soldiery penetrating into the holy places, profaning the sanctuary by their presence and their banners. He sees them lifting up their axes upon the beautiful and delicate carved work of the pillars, setting the temple on fire, and in all the land there is the smoke of the burning synagogues of Jehovah.

"Thine adversaries have roared in the midst of thine assembly;
They have set up their ensigns for signs.
They seemed as men that lifted up
Axes upon a thicket of trees.
And now all the carved work thereof

They break down with hatchet and hammers.
They have set thy sanctuary on fire;
* * * * * * * * *
They have burned up all the synagogues of God in the land."
Ps. 74 : 4-8.

The previous disasters to Jerusalem could be accounted for by the idolatry and disobedience of the people. This disaster could not be accounted for in that way. There was no idolatry whatever in Jerusalem. The race had been thoroughly purged of that. Never in the entire history of the Hebrews had Jehovah been worshiped with such purity. The ceremonial law had been observed with almost painful exactness, and there is no evidence that at this time purity of morals had been disregarded. The cry that arose from the heart of Israel—"O God, why hast thou cast us off for ever?"—was wrung from the experience of the most inexplicable of calamities. To human eyes there was no reason why Israel should be so afflicted. The problem was the eternal problem of the book of Job—how to explain the sufferings of those who with all their hearts are seeking to serve God.

The mystery of this problem has not been cleared up by the advance of the years. Every one of us is confronted with it. The doctrine that regarded misfortune only as the result of sin has absolutely broken down (John 9:1-3), and in place of that easy and superficial explanation men to-day are left, like the Hebrews of old, crying: "O God, why hast thou cast us off?"

Let us frankly admit it; there is no answer that is even measurably satisfactory. The book of Job does not give it. The answer of the book of Job is probably the best answer that can be made. In a word it is that man's outlook upon the universe is limited, and there are enough reasons for trusting God to believe that the Judge of all the earth will do right. That was the solution that the author of the psalm from which we have just quoted reached—

"Yet God is my King of old,
Working salvation in the midst of the earth.
* * * * * * *
The day is thine, the night also is thine:
Thou hast prepared the light and the sun.
Thou has set all the borders of the earth:
Thou hast made summer and winter."
Ps. 74 : 12, 16, 17.

That is the only solution of the problem that the thoughts of men for thousands of years have been able to reach. God who has made day and night, summer and winter, who has prepared the light and set the boundaries of the earth, and in so many ways has vindicated our confidence, is worthy of our trust even when we cannot understand His ways.

"If e'er when faith had fallen asleep,
I heard a voice, 'Believe no more,'
And heard an ever-breaking shore
That tumbled in the Godless deep;

"A warmth within the breast would melt
The freezing reason's colder part,
And like a man in wrath the heart
Stood up and answered, 'I have felt.'

"No, like a child in doubt and fear:
But that blind clamor made me wise;
Then was I as a child that cries,
But, crying, knows his father near."
—Tennyson: In Memoriam.

## CHAPTER L.

### JUDAH'S LOYALTY TO JEHOVAH.

Dan. chs. 8, 11, and External History.

As we have followed the course of Hebrew history we have frequently seen that events threatened the annihilation not only of the Jewish state, but of the Jewish race. In 734 B. C., Judah lost her independence, and never regained it, except during the eighty years running from the Maccabean triumph under Simon (143 B. C.) to the victory of Pompey over Jerusalem (63 B. C.). But the successive conquests of Jerusalem, the vassalage of the Hebrew state, and the bitter experience of the Babylonian captivity had not destroyed the Jewish stock. The Jerusalem of the Persian overlordship was more thoroughly Hebrew than it had ever been before. Hebrew traditions, worship, ideals and civilization came to their full flower in the city that sprang up under the labors of Nehemiah and Ezra. The conquests and captivities left some deplorable marks upon Judah, still, the net result of these experiences was to purify and solidify Judaism.

Alexander the Great.

But under the Greek domination, resulting from the amazing victories of Alexander the Great, the fibre of tough Jewish stock was put to a severer test than it had sustained in the days of Nebuchadnezzar, for there was this important difference between the aims of Nebuchadnezzar and those of Alexander. The Babylonian was satisfied with asserting his suzerainty over conquered peoples, of which the annual tribute was the token. He was satisfied to leave local customs untouched and to concede a very large measure of self-

rule, if insurrections did not occur. The Greek, on the other hand, was not only a conqueror but a missionary. He was not content to leave customs or even languages as he found them. He had an ardent desire not only to conquer the world, but to Hellenize the world, and to make the civilization of the most distant provinces a reflection of the civilization of Macedonia. The Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, which we know as the Septuagint, was made in accordance with this policy. The purpose of Alexander the Great affords a clearer analogy to the missionary purpose of the Christian church than the aim of any other world conqueror, with the possible exception of Napoleon I, who betrayed a somewhat similar ideal when he said, "I propose to make the Mediterranean a French lake."

It is evident then, at a glance, that during the period of the Greek domination the loyalty of the Hebrews to their traditions, their worship and their racial integrity was tested in the severest fashion.

The definite and sharp issue between fidelity to the law of Jehovah and acceptance of Greek morals and worship was presented to Jerusalem in the year 168 B. C. Antiochus Epiphanes, who had usurped the throne of Syria, found his plans against Egypt checked by the veto of Rome. As one in anger turns his wrath upon the first person at hand, Antiochus wreaked his rage against Rome on the Jews. He demanded the extinction of their religion, the destruction of their sacred books and the substitution in the temple at Jerusalem of the worship of Zeus for the worship of Jehovah.

**Head of Antiochus Epiphanes.**

The very enormity of this demand aroused the heroic devotion of the Hebrews to their traditions and their worship. The dreadful test revealed the stubborn fidelity of the Jews to their religion. When we recall how often in the past the nation had forsaken Jehovah, under the enticements of Canaanitish and Egyptian and Assyrian idolatry, we have in this sudden and tremendous outburst of passionate loyalty to Judaism an amazing revelation as to the real measure of the nation's response to the claims of Jehovah. The episode of the three Hebrews in Babylon who refused to worship the image of Nebuchadnezzar, was repeated on a national scale when Jerusalem repudiated the gods of Greece.

The career of the Maccabean princes—Mattathias and his sons, Judas, Jonathan and Simon—marks one of the most stirring and heroic epochs in Hebrew history. Our fathers, who had the books of the Maccabees in their family Bibles, were doubtless much more familiar with this period than most Bible students of this generation. The first book of the Maccabees is a historical document of the very first rank, and it brings before us in a graphic and trustworthy form Jehovah's magnificent vindication—in the historical fact of Hebrew independence—of those who, against the most insidious and powerful temptations, refused to submit to the unholy demands of the Greek conqueror.

As we read the story and ponder it, we cannot resist the reflection that Hebrew history would have had a very different development if the Jews had manifested a similar devotion to Jehovah at the earlier periods of their career. That undoubtedly is true, but we ought not to forget that, as a matter of fact, it was the experience of suffering which those infidelities involved which purified the spirit of the Hebrews so that they were loyal to Jehovah in that time of blood and fire. Mistakes, disloyalties, grievous transgressions, are not without a noble moral fruitage, if

such experiences lead men to turn to God with a true repentance. The ultimate test of the quality of a human soul is what it is, in view of its opportunity and endowment. The very acts that, taken by themselves, call for the sharpest condemnation may give birth to a repentance that equips the life against still stronger temptations. That was the spiritual experience of the Hebrew people.

## CHAPTER LI.

### WEAKNESS AND STRENGTH OF JUDAISM.

### External History.

Without going into the details of the complicated but interesting series of events between the fall of the Maccabean kingdom and the birth of the Saviour we may examine the tendencies of the period as a whole with reference to the light it throws upon the peculiar strength and weakness of the Hebrew people.

For one thing this period throws into high relief the incapacity of the Hebrews to manifest that civic spirit which builds and preserves the state upon strong foundations. The independence which had been won by the Maccabean princes was soon lost. To be sure the kingdom could hardly avoid being drawn into the current of world-politics, but when the Roman power succeeded the Greek the situation was far simpler and less dangerous for Palestine than it had been for a thousand years, and, even if the Hebrews had not maintained an absolute independence of Rome, it was quite within their power to have held the position of favored allies. All these advantages were thrown away by the internal conflicts between different parties, which opened a path for the intrigues of an able, unscrupulous adventurer like Antipater, and for the intervention of Rome under the common pretext, namely, the necessity of establishing law and order. As one thinks of the unhappy fate of the Hebrew state he wishes that this people might have developed that civic sense which underlies the paragraphs on partisanship in Washington's Farewell Address. For lack of it they did not seize their opportunities. The story of Switzerland and of Holland shows what might have been done in Palestine, and the Jews had almost all the qualities which have saved the Swiss and the Dutch, except the power to discriminate between

partisanship and patriotism. There are useful suggestions here for us in our own time and in our own land.

Another characteristic of the Hebrews illustrated in this period is their singular lack of the sense of proportion. They seem to have had almost none of that appreciation of measure and balance which is so strong in the Greek mind. They suffered forces, excellent in themselves, to proceed to extremes that were unreasonable and ruinous, Phariseeism was a legitimate development of one aspect of the revelation of Jehovah, but it was not a legitimate development of the whole disclosure of the truth given to Israel. There are many aspects of Sadduceeism—towards which Jesus was so tolerant—with which we cannot fail to sympathize, but Sadduceeism as a whole was not a normal outcome of Judaism. The Hebrews are not peculiar in their inability to see that extreme developments of any single truth are likely to be untrue. The Romanists, the Puritans, and the modern agnostics, to cite widely separate classes, have fallen into the same error. There is much wisdom in the advice which Dr. Andrew D. White cites from that sensible old mediæval bishop, Ulrich of Augsburg. When sundry theologians were arguing various extreme logical consequences of supposed scriptural dogmas, he said: "Draw not upon the breasts of Holy Writ too hard, lest you obtain blood rather than milk."

And yet, such are the contradictions of human nature, that this trait co-existed with a most capricious devotion to spiritual things. No race in the history of mankind has surpassed the Hebrews in their reckless courage, in their tenacious heroism when their cause was absolutely hopeless. The defense of the fortress of Jerusalem by Aristobulus (B. C. 63), the resistance of the Jews to the armies of Titus (70 A. D.), have passed into military history as supreme and superb examples of heroic self-sacrifice for religion and country. There are few parallels to them. And

yet, this very race could temporize, and compromise with alien worship, and parties among them could betray the common cause to the common enemy. But perhaps this trait is not peculiar to the Hebrews of this period. Perhaps many of us would not quail before persecution, and yet, in the ordinary run of common events, we are very far from being loyal to spiritual ideals.

Lack of the civic sense, failure to appreciate the need of balance and proportion, inconstancy in devotion to the highest things—these are grave faults; they account for many disasters. Still, while we apply this ruthless criticism to the Hebrews just before they hastened to that overthrow which for nearly two thousand years has blotted out their name from the roll of nations, let us not forget that in this very period, as Josephus shows us, the sanctity of Jewish family life, the necessity for thorough instruction of the young in religion, and the certainty of the Messianic hope received an unwonted emphasis. Seldom has there been a more beautiful family life, interpenetrated with religious ideas and hopes, than that which seems to have existed among pious Hebrews in Palestine during the intervals of peace that followed the Maccabean independence down to our era. It was into this atmosphere that the Saviour was born. The creation of this temper and of this attitude toward life was a beautiful and worthy preparation for His coming.

## CHAPTER LII.

### REVIEW OF CHAPTERS 40-51.

We fail to grasp the inner and vital significance of the history of the Hebrews, recorded in the Old Testament, until we construe it in the light of the purpose of God to make this nation the medium of His revelation to the world—a revelation that culminates in the person and work of the Redeemer. The call of Abraham, with its promise that in him all the families of the earth should be blessed (Gen. 12: 1-3), affords the clue for the interpretation of this vast historic movement. The unique character and mission of Israel involved the necessity that the nation should pass through peculiar experiences. No given generation existed only for itself. The dealings of Jehovah with it were tempered by the consideration that it must pass on the torch of truth, burning still more brightly, to its successors. In a real sense Israel became the suffering servant of Jehovah, from whose discipline every other people received untold benefit.

At the conclusion of these studies it is pertinent to ask: What was the net outcome of all these experiences? What, as the result of all this suffering and trial, did Israel do for the nations? What was the service of the seed of Abraham to mankind?

To begin with, we can hardly fail to see that it was given to Israel to attain to a worthy conception of God, and to impart that to mankind. The idea that men have of God is fundamental in religion, in worship, in morals, and it absolutely conditions their outlook upon life and upon all its problems. The prohibition of the second commandment is not to be limited to the fashioning of idols from wood and stone. Men are constantly tempted to make gods out of their own imaginations, or out of the devices of their own hearts. To such gods they pay a worship as idolatrous as though

they bowed down before an image of gold or ivory. There is no question that so goes to the foundations of rational thought as the question: What is God? How are we to conceive Him? The Christian answer is larger than the Hebrew, but the Christian answer presupposes the Hebrew. The elements of our thought of God as supreme, as personal, as righteousness, we owe to the divine revelation through the history of Israel.

Still further, it must be plain to those who have followed the stages of this historical development that we owe to it a unique conception of the evil and guilt of sin, or, to put it in another way, an exalted, worthy ideal of human life, for the sense of sin is an exact measure of one's moral and spiritual ideal. We recall at once how it was burned in upon the consciousness of the nation that fidelity to the law of righteousness was the supreme thing in human life; how violation of that law separated the offender from the brotherhood of the congregation, and from the fellowship of God, and how the penalties of transgression came upon the wrong-doer like a swift consuming fire. If sometimes we are tempted to think that the Hebrews' ideal of the perfect life, pleasing to Jehovah, which began this sense of sin, was narrow and partial, we should bear two things in mind. One is that Israel was undergoing an exclusive discipline fitting it for its spiritual world mission, through its daughter, Christianity. In the light of that consideration the hard and narrow features of the Jewish ideal of the relation of Hebrews to men of other nations become at once explicable and necessary.

We are also to remember that we are to get our conception of the Hebrews' thought of the perfect life from its ultimate exposition in the great prophets. We may easily bring home to ourselves the surpassing ideal of human life given us through Israel in a very personal way. Let any father and mother compare the moral ideals of the Old Testament with

those of any of the ethnic faiths—the religion of Hammurabi, of Egypt, of Confucius, of Buddha, of Mohammed—and then ask the simple question: To what ideal do I wish my son or daughter to conform? The question answers itself. If the revelation of the Old Testament had given us nothing but its sweet, strong, reverent, wholesome conception of the ideal of human life, it would have performed an inestimable service for the race. And the sense of sin, which is such a deep and vital thing in the history of Israel, is simply the sense of failure to live up to the ideal.

Beyond this, we must have been impressed with the fact that there runs through this history of Israel the hope and promise of the reconciliation between God and man. On the one hand we have the lofty Hebrew conception of Jehovah; on the other, the noble ideal of man which manifests itself in the consciousness of sin. But the fact of sin is not irremediable or ultimate.

We may not place too much reliance upon our interpretations of the vague forecasts of redemption in the earliest records, but, as we seek to penetrate to the real import of the sacrifices, of providential discipline, of the messages of the prophets and of their insuperable optimism, the Old Testament becomes what Jonathan Edwards called "the history of redemption." It is at this point also that the religion of the Hebrews presents a sharp contrast with the ethnic faiths. Its movement is always onward. The Golden Age is not in the past but in the future; and prophets like Amos, Isaiah of Babylon and Jeremiah, never permit their analyses of present conditions, or their scathing rebukes, to divert their attention for long from the transcendently blessed future toward which the whole historic movement, under the guidance of Jehovah, moves.

In its conception of the character of God, of the worth of man, and of the possibility of the restoration of complete fellowship between them, Israel gave

the world a message of unsurpassed depth and power; and it was this message which formed the adequate preparation and basis for the mission of Jesus Christ.

SEP 21 1908

BS
1197

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
0 027 261 040 A